



The Great Physician

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Wherever Jesus went, people were waiting for him to attend to their physical and spiritual needs. The Gospel of Mark 6:55-56 says that Jesus and his disciples went to Gennesaret by boat. When the boat was moored, people recognized the Messiah ⁵⁵**and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.** ⁵⁶**And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.**

Jesus said in Luke 5:31, **“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick;”** The word used for physician in Greek is *iatros* (ἰατρός), which refers to spiritual as well as physical healing. Jesus was undoubtedly using the word “physician” to refer to both the spiritual and physical aspects of healing.

The gospel lesson from Mark 1:29-31 this morning shows us how the Lord was attentive to those who needed healing of body, mind and spirit. This entire passage is about healing for one of his disciple’s mother-in-law as well as for those in the community. ²⁹**As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.** ³⁰**Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.** ³¹**He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.**

The Lord’s touch was enough to give healing to Simon’s family member. Others in the community knew of his presence in a place and brought their friends and loved ones to be healed from all types of illness and afflictions. The remainder of the passage from Mark illustrates the Lord’s appeal to those in need. ³²**That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.** ³³**And the whole city was gathered around the door.** ³⁴**And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.**

The one phrase that stands out for me and can stand out for is ³³**And the whole city was gathered around the door.** Imagine all those people in that community surrounding that house bringing people who are sick or possessed. Yes, in Green Valley there are those who are at the door of Valley Presbyterian

Church who are in need of healing. Of course I can be talking about those who we assist with food, clothing or presence.

This passage is referring to people back then as well as us today. Each one of us has come through those doors with our personal needs, hurts and brokenness seeking a wholesome relationship with Christ. Many of the member care ministries including the pastors within this church, provide the compassion and presence of Christ as well as many others. With this recognition of a loving and healing Christ in our midst then there is no place for rumors, for criticism of others as well as pastors, for strategies to hurt others or ways to take control of the church, or for ganging up on someone just because they do not agree with us. You know my friends there is plenty of pain in this world. There are plenty of wounded people in this world, so let's make the love and healing of Christ a true part of our own dna and in the ways we practice Jesus.

Indeed, the Great Physician heals a person. The healing ministry of Jesus is ever-present. Sometimes it surprises us because we are uncomfortable when it is offered to us.

Let me share with you a story about Kay who was a woman in a church I served as Interim Senior Pastor back in Missouri. She was dealing with newly found cancer that was starting to spread throughout her body. She and I visited often and prayed constantly.

As she prepared to go to MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, we talked about her greatest concerns. She said, "The one thing that is my biggest concern is the fear and trembling I have now because of what might happen. In other words, I would die sooner than I would like." I could see her hands and body shaking as she spoke.

So I reached across the table to Kay to reassure her and she grabbed my hand with both of her's as she began to cry. I was crying too. She held tightly to my hand for some time as I was present with her. When I saw her relax a bit, we prayed together as I lifted her concerns up to God and entrusted her into Christ's care. Also into the care of the Great Physician in Jesus Christ.

When we finished praying, I asked if she would like to have a laying on of hands before she left for Houston. She looked at me with a quizzical look and asked what I meant by laying on of hands. I shared with Kay what it said in James 5:13-15 from the New Revised Standard Version, **¹³Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the lord. ¹⁵The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up;...**

The more I shared with Kay the more she became comfortable with the idea. I asked which two elders she would like to have present as well as other family or friends. I emphasized that this laying on of hands was not magical but provided a sense of healing. Her greatest concern to share her trembling and uncertainty with others became an opportunity to gather for prayer and laying on of hands.

Two weeks later, two elders, one of her daughter's, several friends and I gathered in her living room where she sat on a chair in the middle of the room. I

once again thanked everyone for coming and shared what we were there for and how our presence was to surround Kay with love, prayer and assurance. We reached out to place our hands on her shoulders and head.

There was a deep sense of God's presence around us as we began to pray deeply for her individually and together as we concluded with the Lord's Prayer. We all thought the time together was just a few minutes but it turned out to be close to an hour. We were amazed because of the depth of the prayers and the ever loving arms of God surrounding us. At the moment, the world was shut out as we entered that powerful moment in God's presence.

Kay shared with us that a great calm and reassurance came over her while we all acknowledged that there was a spiritual presence surrounding us. The fears she had before didn't seem so paramount as she knew we blessed her for what lay ahead regardless how things turned out. She was at peace.

I kept up with Kay by phone as long as possible as she began her cancer treatments in Houston. Repeatedly she expressed to me how she felt the calmness of her heart as she remembered the laying on of hands in her home.

A couple years later, I heard from one of the members of the prayer group that was present that Kay had died. I believe to this day that Kay died with the reassuring calm of God's presence. She was entrusted into God's heavenly care and kingdom and most of all God's love. She was home. She was healed.

Sometime ago, a man asked me if I had seen the picture of Jesus assisting a physician in surgery. I had not. He shared with me that when he was in a hospital in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina, he saw a large painting on a wall of a surgeon in surgery and Jesus had his hand on the surgeon's shoulder. The Great Physician was present with another physician going about a ministry of healing. The man asked me to search for such a picture. When I found it, I made a copy for him. This same picture is on the front of the bulletin as well as at the end of this sermon.

So my dear brothers and sisters, may we remember that Jesus is always with us in life. Even when we are confronted with the pains, hurts and fears of the day, we can rest assured that Jesus is the Great Physician. And is always present with us. Always! He is the great healer who is a constant presence in our lives today. Jesus is the Great Physician.

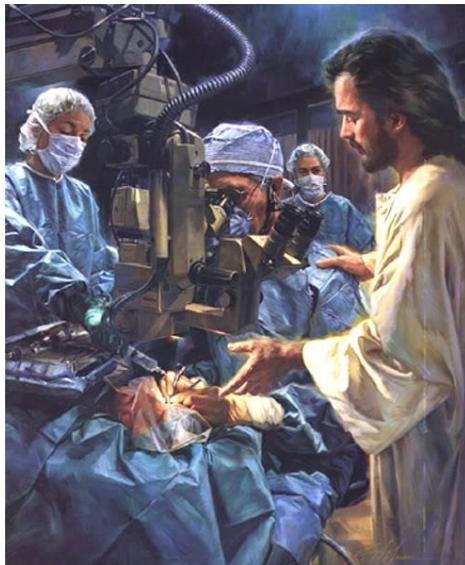
Some of the words from the song "You Are Mine" ring true for us in the Christian life.

I am hope for all who are hopeless
I am eyes for all who long to see
in the shadows of the night,
I will be your light
come and rest in me

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
come and follow me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

Friends, if you take anything away from this day it is this: Jesus is inviting us to come and rest in him.

Let us pray: We thank you, O God, for your Son Jesus. We thank you for his life and love among us. In our own brokenness of the day, God, we ask that you heal us and give us strength. You nurture us with abiding love. Help us to remember you in all the troubles of the day even those troubles that we encounter in family life and in interpersonal relationships. We ask that you remind us of grace and forgiveness in your Son Jesus. For he is calling us to be his own, his own followers. He is calling us to remember that he is the great healer and comforter of all those who live the struggles of life as well as those in the joy of life. We thank you for your Son Jesus and for this time in Worship. Amen.



Supporting Scriptures:

Mark 1:29-34 (NRSV)

²⁹As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

James 5:13-18 (NRSV)

¹³Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. ¹⁷Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.