

The message given by Rev. Dr. Tom Zoelzer on Pentecost, June 28, 2009 based on Mark 5:21-43.

The Power of Healing

Play Chris Rice's "Untitled Hymn" also known as "Come to Jesus" –

I have served 3 congregations so far as Transitional Senior Pastor, and twice now I have had the opportunity to attend worship at my church on candidating weekend. Candidating weekend is the opportunity for a congregation to meet the candidate the Search Committee is presenting as Senior Pastor, listen to him or her preach, and then vote their approval or disapproval. Candidating weekend is in your distant future.

On candidating weekend the Transitional Pastor is absent so that the prospective new minister has center stage for your consideration. So on the two candidating Sundays I have had so far, I have had the opportunity to attend worship at my congregation in Plainfield, Illinois where my wife is the pastor.

Each time I attend worship there, it reminded me what a wonderful worship leader my wife is! She has the gift for it. Her gift is that she not only invites people into an intellectual experience during worship but also a spiritual one as well. She starts worship by inviting people to breathe (let's try that) and to wake up by shaking out their arms and legs and feet and neck (do this). She also invites them to shake out all burdens that they brought to church that day (shake out your burdens.) Throughout her services, she leads people down a path that invited participants into a more transcendent moment that opens them to the divine.

Well, it was communion Sunday two years ago when I was in attendance, and the musician began to play, like most musicians do when it is time to distribute the bread and cup. But instead of just playing, the musician began to sing, and she sang the song you just heard on the CD. Well, at first I was a little put off by the song because of the opening words. It sang about theology that is different than mine – “weak and wounded sinner lost and left to die” unsettled me.

Well, anyway I was struggling with the words but I was also getting caught up in the power of the music, and then more words came that began to speak to me – *“Like a new born baby, don’t be afraid to crawl – And remember when you walk, sometimes you fall.* And suddenly, this little tear began to form over in the corner of my eye, and I wondered “What’s this about?”

Then the next verse declared – *“Sometimes the way is lonely, and steep and filled with pain, so if your sky is dark and pours the rain, then cry to Jesus, cry to Jesus, cry to Jesus and live.”* And then a tear began to form in the other eye.

And then when the key changed and the singer belted out – *“O, and when the love spills over, and music fills the night, and when you can’t contain your joy inside, then dance for Jesus, dance for Jesus, dance for Jesus and live!”* When the singer invited us to “dance for Jesus”, I just lost it! – Big tears down the cheek, looking for my handkerchief time, - a very emotional moment! If you know me very well you would know that this is quite unusual - Maybe a little tear in one eye now and then but that is it! I try to be the tough guy that our society seems to expect from men.

But the song got to me because it was singing about my life at the time and at that point I had lived 16 months away from my wife while I served as Transitional Senior Pastor for a congregation in Omaha, Nebraska while my wife was back in Illinois serving her congregation. I was not ready to admit it. But 16 months had been along time away from her. The song reminded me that I loved my wife very much, and since she loves to dance, the "dance for Jesus" part of the song told me that my time in Omaha was almost over, and we would be able to dance together again soon. It was truly a healing moment. When the communion elements came I was ready to commune with God because the whole service invited me to be connect body, mind, and spirit so that I was ready to be in communion with God. I was renewed and made whole that day.

Our scripture today speaks about the wholeness that comes from God through healing. Today we encounter two stories in one as first Jesus was approached by one of the leaders of the synagogue.

In Jesus day, a leader of the synagogue was an important person. The synagogue oversaw the local government as well as spiritual matters. Jarius was a village official and a religious official all at the same time. This man was an important person in town. Yet, he fell at the feet of this young rabbi and begged him repeatedly to come to his home. The man's little daughter was seriously ill to the point of death. He wanted Jesus to come and lay his hands on her so that she made be made whole. Our text uses the word "well", but the Greek word is about being "made sound or whole." He was desperate. So Jesus went with him.

Along the way, Jesus was touched by a woman who was also seeking healing. She had been afflicted by a flow of blood for twelve years and had spent all she had with many physicians.

A woman in her condition was a social outcast. In Jewish society at that time, every time a woman had a flow of blood she had to segregate herself from other people, especially men. A menstruating woman was considered ritually unclean, and anyone she touched or touched her became ritually unclean as well. This woman not only had a medical condition but a social problem as well.

This is why she didn't come to Jesus directly but sought to just touch his cloak in her desperation. She touched Jesus, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

Jesus stopped to discover who had touched him. As you heard, Jesus was impressed with her faith and said, "*Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.*" In her encounter with Jesus, she received a blessing. She was not only healed physically but brought back to life in society as well.

Meanwhile, the report came that the first man's little girl had died. But Jesus said, "*Do not fear, only believe.*" As you heard this morning he went to the little girl's house, he looked beyond the laughter of the crowd, and he went into the little girl's room and said "*Little girl, get up!*" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about.

This scripture tells us that Jesus has authority over nature, over sickness, and even over death, and we are thrilled to hear it! But many

times we ask, "Why doesn't stuff like that happen today?" -- Who says it doesn't? Healing comes in many forms. Healing happens all the time. The questions are, "Do we ask and do we pray for it?" Healing is about wholeness in body, mind and spirit.

This is why I including the handout in your bulletin by Dr. James. K. Wagner that has excerpts of his book *An Adventure in Healing & Wholeness – The Healing Ministry of Christ in the Church Today*. This is a study guide that I have used with small groups that helps people discover the healing power of prayer. In his book, Dr. Wagner talks about the five kinds of health:

Five Kinds of Health:

1. Spiritual Health – Dealing with one's relationship with God is first and primary
2. Physical Health – When we apply prayer therapy to physical illnesses, we may experience one of three possibilities:
 - Instant cure, total remission, or complete healing may occur but are rare.
 - Gradual improvement is the most common experience with prayer.
 - When we see no apparent or obvious improvement in the physical condition, God is faithful and gives us strength and grace to keep on keeping on, to cope, to live with the situation.
3. Mental and Emotional Health – Jesus knew the mind powerfully influences the body. Perhaps the most practical help that Jesus gave everyone he met was hope, along with encouragement.
4. Healthy Relationships – Forgiveness truly is a key to good health, benefiting the forgiver as much or even more than the one being forgiven.
5. Ultimate Health in the Resurrection Following the Death of the Body – Christians understand death of the physical body as a process one goes through in order to experience the ultimate healing and wholeness in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Healing is about prayer and healing is a process. It takes faith on our part and trust in God that God is at work in us even if we don't get the results we expect. Healing is about wholeness.

Sister Mary had developed such painful ankles that she found it difficult to teach. Her doctors thought perhaps she suffered from a form of arthritis, but they were unable to help her very much.

Mary's predicament deeply troubled her. She loved teaching and considered it the ministry to which she was called. Her distress was compounded by her lifelong painful shyness. What could she do if she was not able to be with her "little people;" the only ones with whom she was really comfortable?

When her suffering became evident to some members of her parish, they invited Mary to attend a healing prayer group in her church. At first she refused, fearing she might have to talk in front of everyone. Worse yet, if the parishioners prayed for her, she would be the center of attention. And then there were all those hands that would touch her. . . .

In the end, her friends won out. Reluctantly, she went to the meeting and, just as she had feared, found herself in the middle of a group of people. They prayed for her, their hands on her ankles: "God, please heal Sister Mary's ankles. . . . Hear our prayer, O God."

When Mary's prayer group prayed for Sister Mary, God heard; but God did not heal Mary's ankles. Instead a wonderfully funny thing happened. As the group prayed for her ankles, her ear that had been nearly deaf since childhood suddenly opened, allowing her to hear with that ear for the first time in many years. Amid the laughter and the tears that followed, any

illusions that the group could predict what God would do quickly melted away.

The next week Mary did not need urging to attend the healing group. Once again the group prayed for her ankles, and once again she experienced healing, but not in her ankles. Instead, the arthritis in her arm improved.

This went on week after week for several months. Each time the group prayed for Mary's ankles, some minor ache or pain would vanish or improve. Many times the group would end in laughter at the peculiar way God seemed to be working. However, Mary was certain that God was indeed at work, and the small physical improvements kept her coming back.

During this time, God was working marvelously with Mary in other ways. She became deeply aware that God loved her. Of course Mary already "knew" this, and she had taught her first graders that God is love. But now for the first time in her life Mary felt God's passionate, tender love. God was no longer a demanding father ready with punishments if she did not work hard to please him, but one who delighted in her. As Jesus became more real to her as friend as well as savior, Mary's shyness gradually diminished. She even found herself reading the Old Testament lesson at Sunday worship in front of hundreds of people, something she would not have dreamed of doing only a few months before.

But here is the enigma: Mary still had painful ankles. They had - improved only a little after months of prayer. One day Mary was asked why she thought the pain in her ankles persisted. She replied: "My ankles were

the bait that enticed me to pray for healing in the first place. The continued pain kept me coming back so that God could heal me in ways I didn't even know to pray for. I couldn't have imagined the depth of this healing and how it involved so much of me. Just think of what I would have missed if my ankles had been healed that first night. God had something much more profound in mind for me than just my ankles."

Then her eyes twinkled and she smiled her wonderful smile. "Anyway, don't say my ankles weren't healed. Just say 'they aren't healed yet'." She went on to say that she had begun to sense a new call to be a chaplain to some of the older sisters in her community who were in poor health. She was looking forward to developing a new ministry in that direction.

Healing is about wholeness and new life. What kind of healing do you need to pray about today? What in your spirit, what in your body, what in your mind and emotions, and what in your relationships do you seek healing and new possibilities? What do you need to pray about today? While you are praying, remember -

(music) *"Like a new born baby, don't be afraid to crawl – And remember when you walk, sometimes you fall. So fall on Jesus, fall on Jesus, fall on Jesus and live."*

"Sometimes the way is lonely, and steep and filled with pain, so if your sky is dark and pours the rain, then cry to Jesus, cry to Jesus, cry to Jesus and live."

O, and when the love spills over, and music fills the night, and when you can't contain your joy inside, then dance for Jesus, dance for Jesus, dance for Jesus and live!

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