

THE HEALING PRESENCE OF GOD PT. I

LOCKBOURNE / OBETZ UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES

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SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 10:1,5-10 NIV
Matthew 17:14-20

MT 10:1 He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to **heal** every disease and sickness.

MT 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷ As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' ⁸ **Heal** the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. ⁹ Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; ¹⁰ take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.

MT 17:14 When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they could not **heal** him."

MT 17:17 "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." ¹⁸ Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

MT 17:19 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

MT 17:20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. "

IN GOVERNMENT, Social Security is considered the third rail of politics. For politicians, they best not even touch the subject, or it may be the last thing they will ever do as a public servant. The same is true for our topic today. Just as one cannot look at our present economy and not be concerned about what's ahead, so to, we cannot look at the Word of God, and say we will not broach the subject of healing. Anything in God's Word cannot and should not be intentionally ignored.

Healing has always been a part of our Christian doctrine and faith. While many protestant churches have shied away from an intentional invocation of healing, Roman Catholicism has maintained our belief in the material and supernatural powers of healing since the days of the first century church.

Only in the last two decades has the church body as a whole, become interested in rediscovering the biblical imperative offered by Jesus, throughout his entire ministry.

Scientific studies are now emerging that demonstrates that people who are anointed in prayers for healing and recovery, do so at a much greater rate. Those who intentionally focus on a theology of healing are usually individuals who lead healthier, more productive lives.

Before going further we need to acknowledge a few things:

1. **When the church discusses healing, it is not replacing or ignoring any material methods known to restore the body.** The healing ministry of the church employs every legitimate healing method. ALL HEALING IS FROM GOD.
Just as God is the source of all life, she is also the source of all wisdom, knowledge, memory, skills, abilities, nature and all other factors that contribute to restoration and healing. The process of healing is not “what skill or gift” does someone have. The act of healing recognizes that every act, word or form of healing originates with God. ALL HEALING IS FROM GOD.
2. **Healing is one of the ministries that Jesus Christ committed to His church.** The gospel lessons tell us repeatedly that Jesus visited towns and villages and continually healed all those who came to him. Jesus then engages His disciples to go and do likewise. When the church fails to engage in a healing ministry, it is not being obedient to the teachings of Christ. Healing ministries is primarily about surrender to Christ, not what you can do.
3. **God wills wholeness for the total person.** God never hands out suffering or permits evil on persons as a matter of creating spiritual formation. God does not punish his children in these ways for the purpose of retribution. Those beliefs belong to non-Christian religions. Jesus never divided a person into body and soul. He never ministered to one and not the other. Jesus saw people as a whole. Jesus ministered to them on that same understanding. Jesus appears in the material world to save

real, physical/material people; not just souls. The gospels tell us repeatedly, that sickness of mind and body are continually addressed by Jesus and as His followers, we are called to do the same.

4. **Healing is not achieved through any magical means or haphazard methods.** In God's healing, it is not about us. We do not pretend to have the skill or supernatural ability to do or create anything. Our participation is selfless intercessory prayer, in a moment where we earnestly think more of others than ourselves or our abilities. For all Christians with a prayer life, we center ourselves on the specific needs, in light of the grace, the power and the healing benevolence of God. There is no hocus-pocus or slight of hand. In all examples and forms of healing, God's healing powers flow in response to authentic prayer.
5. **Every Christian is called to be a minister of healing.** Healing is a ministry of the entire church. When we in our worship and in our times of prayer throughout the week remember those in need of healing, we are offering the first step in healing. Healing is a job for God's community, not just a single Many times today when we think of faith healing, we think of the tent healers, emotional excitement, loud music and scene more reminiscent of a rock concert than a spiritual healing. We need to be mindful that God responds to faithfulness; not personalities, scenery, location or popularity. God can heal whoever, whenever, however and sometimes through whomever He chooses. There are no limits to God's healing abilities. God can heal in a monastery and in the midst of a circus. We are the ones who limit God, when we say how and when. When we open ourselves to God, we need to resist allowing our cultural opinions from setting limits on what will be acceptable in "our" sights. The most humble or insignificant believer to the highest Episcopal office may have the gifts of healing. None should ever be denied.
6. **There are no ultimate failures in the church's ministry of healing.** Even in those cases where physical or emotional

healing is not complete, the highest healing is always a person's right relationship to the living Christ, the wholeness of the spirit and the peace that results from such a relationship.

7. **Lack of health does not equate to a lack of faith or salvation.**

Just as there are differing components of the physical body, so to are there differing dimensions to the spiritual body. Just as all parts of the body are not always working in harmony with one another- so to, there will be times when our spiritual dimensions are out of sorts. This does not mean that we are either physically dead or spiritually disconnected.

E. Stanley Jones reminds us of seven ways in which God heals:

1. God heals through surgeons.
2. God heals through physicians.
3. God can heal through mental suggestion.
4. God can heal through climate.
5. God heals through deliverance- from a persons underlying fears, loneliness, self-centeredness, purposelessness, resentments, and guilt's that produce diseases.
6. God heals through the direct operation of the Spirit of God upon the body. (Rom. 8:11)
7. God heals through the final cure- the resurrection of the body.

Sometimes people feel this last one is a bit of a cop out; but this is not the case. In these events the evidence of God's healing is seen in God providing those in this step of healing to individual power; not to merely bear their suffering- but to use it, in many different and positive ways, until the day of their final cure.

You and I are called to be a part of the corporate health and well being of our entire congregation. We do this through our prayers, our expressed thoughts, our acts of compassion, our counsel, and our benevolences.

There is not a moment in our life, where we cannot be a part of a healing ministry.

Ten years ago my first daily chore after arriving at church was to open my e-mail, answer immediate questions and get on with my

day. At that time, I think three of my parishioners were on line. As the years increased, so did the volume- not just of spam or bulk mail- it increased in the parish wanting me to know specific things about specific situations.

Today, my opening exercise has taken on new dimensions. You regularly send me questions, information and requests for prayers. What was once five minutes at the most has grown into 30 to 60 minutes per day. It has evolved into a time of devotion, reflection and specific prayers that come before me. One individual sends me two or three requests at a time. When I'm remembering them and the requests they are making known, I many times say to God, "I won't say Amen on this one, because I'm sure I'll be back in just a moment." It is a wonderful time to remember that God desires to be just as involved in caring specifically for others, as we do. In looking over the body of requests, I am reminded how greatly God loves us, from seeing and hearing answers to prayer.

Healing is a connectional process. It requires a caring for, standing with others through the process of healing.

Next week we will look at specific biblical steps in the healing process. In the meantime, consider the blessings of healings you have witnessed in your lifetime. Consider the number of people who stand in need of prayer in this day, and ask God, how you might respond to His commission, in creating a healing community of faith.

You may be the healing presence of God in someone's life, today.