



Week 3: Jesus the Lord, Healing the Sick

Scripture References

Throughout Scripture, Jesus' healing power is demonstrated (Luke 4.40; John 5.1-18). He brings salvation in the fullest sense, not only from sin-of which our Lord was free-(Hebrews 4.15) but from all that afflicts our human condition which he fully shared (Hebrews 2.17). He brings what today is called 'wellbeing.' The word 'salvation' means health of spirit, soul, and body. Christ offers us life in all its fulness (John 10.10) but the surrender of faith is needed on our part if his power is to have its full effect in us (Mark 6.5).

From the Book of Common Prayer

The Prayer of Humble Access

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. **Amen.**

Act of Faith in Jesus

THE Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in him, to whom all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey, be now and evermore thy defence; and make thee know and feel, that there is none other Name under heaven given to man, in whom, and through whom, thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Collect for Purity

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name: through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Comment on BCP Prayers

Sin is no barrier to God's mercy, rather, because we confess our sin God raises us up! In the first prayer, reaching out empty hands like the Canaanite woman (Luke 18.1-8) we beg for scraps from the Lord's table. God both cleanses us (Psalm 51.7) and comes to live within us (John 14.23). In the second prayer (for the Visitation of the Sick), we confess our need for Jesus the only Saviour and healer. The third prayer asks God that his Holy Spirit would work within us, enlightening the darkness of our hearts, filling us with love and the praise of his name.

Reflection, by Revd. Anita Colpus

Rector, Trinity in Lewes

Half-way through our reflections on 'Jesus the Lord', this week we consider 'healing the sick' and I find this to be the one proclamation about Jesus which does not have certainty in its outcome. But please bear with me before you suspect that I don't believe in healing! I do, and am certain and confident that Jesus can heal and still heals today. We believe in, and worship a God who heals, yet as we journey through life, we have all known loved ones who have not been healed and even find across the gospels, examples that Jesus did not heal everyone.

There were those who were not brought to Jesus and therefore were not healed and there are those who, because of their lack of faith were not healed. When I was reading the story of the lame man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-18), I wondered about the crowds of sick people, disabled, blind, lame and paralysed, who were lying by the pool. Did Jesus heal them or not? The text does not tell us.

Jesus asked the sick man (John 5:6), 'Do you want to get well?' - not such a silly question, as we are told the man had been sick and lying there for thirty-eight years. If Jesus were to heal this man, it would bring an incredible change to his life. It would be literally life-changing

The man would have to re-engage with society, get a job, be responsible for his family; he would have to work every day - no more lying around by the pool depending on others. Jesus gives us all that invitation - do you want to get well? Do you want your life to be transformed in all its fullness?

The man at the pool does want Jesus to heal him, to transform his life and so Jesus tells him to 'stand up, pick up his mat, and walk.' Jesus' words resonate with the healing of the paralysed man, as does the continuation of this healing, as the Evangelist then discloses in the story that it is the Sabbath. Now the man is sinning (the legalists claimed!) because he is working, i.e., carrying his mat on the Sabbath.

The leaders begin harassing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules, but Jesus' reply shows that transformation of the man's whole life - healing in all its fullness - is more important than the details of the law.

God is in the business of renewal and transformation: forgiveness and healing, in the full sense of salvation. The Lord wants to bring us to full health - health for our souls, our minds, our spirits, not just physical healing. Jesus tells the man to stop sinning or something worse may happen to him. Jesus is bothered about all sin that afflicts our human condition and wants this man, and us as well, to experience wholeness, well-being, indeed life in all its fullness.

From the beginning of Holy Scripture, we see that God gives life abundantly. Jesus declares that he has come to give that life to us (John 10:10). Yet when we look at life today - our lives, stories of people in our community, our country, our world, our family, our friends - we can be forgiven for believing that the first half of this verse is truer than the second half. The enemy has come and taken away joy and hope, health and happiness - has literally stolen it from our grasp physically, destroying hope and banishing peace from our minds. This is his nature and Jesus warns us about him.

Yet Jesus goes on to say... 'I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly.' The words 'that they may have' are translated from the Greek tense that means not only to have but to possess continually. The life Jesus offers is one filled with vitality, above and beyond what is regular - the life Jesus gives is extraordinary and excessive. Jesus gives us life overflowing, rich beyond compare, life to the ultimate maximum.

We will have trials, we will face struggles, we will experience pain and suffering, loss and hurt. Yet Jesus gives life. He will give you all you need to receive that life along with hope for the eternal life that will be the completion of God's purpose of transformation and renewal for everyone who believes in Jesus and is obedient to him.

Jesus gives forgiveness and physical healing to this man at the pool, as he does to us when we turn to him and ask. He is God incarnate, who always has mercy and cleanses and restores us through his body and blood given for us on the cross and to us in the holy sacrament. It is in and through Jesus, and him alone, that health and salvation are given: there is power and healing in his name.

Reflection on this week's image

Through the saving incarnation of his Son God took to himself the whole of our wounded human nature: how might his saving grace heal us from our wounds of sin and death?

Questions for Discussion

- Who have you known who has not been healed physically this side of heaven? How does that impact your belief in Jesus who heals?
- Jesus asks that man, 'Do you want to be well?' - not a silly question. I wonder if some people don't want to be completely healed because of the change in lifestyle that would demand. What do you think and feel about that?
- Who are you praying for who is sick? What would it look like to pray for wholeness and salvation in its fullest sense?
- What does 'life in all its fullness' look like?