

**Isaiah 53:4-6**

**Luke 5:17-26**

**April 15, 2018**

## **Love Can Heal**

Two weeks ago, on Easter Sunday, I said, God cared enough about His creation – that is us – that He didn't leave us just to founder in our own brokenness: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* John 3:16. That's really what Easter is saying to us: God loves us enough to do something about our condition. Two weeks ago I also said: Because God raised Jesus from the dead after the catastrophe of the cross, we can be sure that God has triumphed over all catastrophes. In Christ we're on the winning team - in this life and beyond. God's love triumphs!

Then last week Darrell helped us understand how love (this love of God we know in Jesus Christ) can transform us - our lives and our situations. Today let us consider these words: *"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities...upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed...All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,"* Isaiah 53:4-6.

Someone has said that the "John 3:16 of the Old Testament" is found in these words from Isaiah 53, because these verses make the way of salvation so clear that we cannot miss it. Christianity isn't about how to be spiritual, achieve your goals or have your best life now. Christianity isn't about philosophy. It's not about talk. Christianity is about power. There is power in God's love for us. Power to obey God. Power to change. Power to love those who are messed up. Power to get back up after being pummeled by wave after wave of affliction. Power to wield the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith to extinguish the devil's fiery darts. *And* power to heal.

Two weeks ago (on Easter) I said that God's love in Jesus Christ has power to triumph over all the brokenness in your life. Today, I tell you, God's love in Jesus Christ has power to heal all the brokenness in your life. *".... with his wounds we are healed"* strange as that may sound. What do you think needs healing in your life? ... Your body? Your family? Your relationships? Your bank account? Your emotions? Your attitude? Your soul? Did you ever consider that all those things that might need healing are inter-connected?

### **A Healing Heritage**

Read the Bible, pay close attention, and you'll see that there is a heritage of divine healing recorded

in its pages. Since ancient times believers have known that God can heal. Many of the Psalms are perhaps 3,000 years old and say things like this: ***“Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases...”*** Psalm 103:2-3. Again, in Psalm 147 ***“He heals the broken-hearted, and binds up their wounds,*** Psalm 147:3.

The prophets of ancient Israel called on the healing power of God.<sup>1</sup> Even an enemy of Israel – Naaman, the Syrian army commander - was healed and praised God for His healing power.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah records how when mortally ill King Hezekiah prayed to God and was healed.<sup>3</sup>

We know that Jesus healed the sick and lame – that is a common theme throughout the gospels. It says in Matthew, ***“... he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people,”*** Matthew 4:23. Luke reports the same thing. ***“And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere,”*** Luke 9:6. <sup>4</sup> In chapter nine of John’s Gospel there is a wonderful story of how Jesus healed a blind man – giving him his sight. Jesus has sometimes been called “The Great Physician” – for good reason.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke report that Jesus sent his disciples out to proclaim the good news and to heal saying, ***“As you go, proclaim this message: “The kingdom of heaven has come near.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.”*** Matt. 10:5, 7-8. Similar accounts are given in Mark and Luke.<sup>5</sup> Jesus’ disciples continued his healing acts after his return to heaven<sup>6</sup> and this legacy has been reflected in a history of Christian hospitals and concern for physical healing.

### **Healing The Sin Sick Soul**

So what is the meaning of all these accounts of God’s healing power found in the Bible? If you look at all the passages about healing, you may notice this: physical healings and forgiveness of sins often go together. In the story of the paralytic lowered through the roof in front of Jesus, it is quite clear. It says in Luke’s gospel of Jesus that day, meeting with ***“Pharisees and teachers of the law from every village in Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem”*** that ***“the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.”*** So when Jesus saw the faith of the paralyzed man’s friends who brought him, he said to the paralytic, ***“Friend, your sins are forgiven.”*** The Bible says that Jesus saw their faith. Whose faith? Doubtless, it is the faith of the four men. Jesus saw their resourcefulness and their persistence, powered by their faith. No doubt he also recognized faith in the man on the stretcher. Surely they did not bring him against his will. His faith and the faith of his friends was perhaps the only faith Jesus saw in that whole room.

But there is something else even more unusual here. Jesus didn’t heal the man at first. Instead he says, ***“Your sins are forgiven.”*** Why? Because this man

had a deeper need than physical healing. There is more than one kind of paralysis. There is the paralysis of the body caused by disease; there is also the paralysis of the soul caused by sin. This man was sicker than he knew.

The rabbis said it this way: “No sick man is healed until his sins are forgiven.” That’s because all suffering is ultimately rooted in sin. Not that this man was especially sinful or that you or your sick family members are greater sinners than those who are physically healthy. He wasn’t, you aren’t, and they aren’t. But this paralytic stands as a kind of lesson to teach us the truth that death and disease are the consequence of sin. If there were no sin in the universe, there would be no sickness. If there were no disobedience to God’s original intent in creation, there would be no death. Sin is the cause of the brokenness of creation which God is seeking to renew. So, healing is a sign of God restoring creation to what He intended.

Romans 3:23 is still true: *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* That is true of king and clown, philosopher and fool, teacher and student. All of us have the same problem, this brokenness we call sin, and all of us need the same thing. Jesus is teaching us by the order in which he does things: spiritual healing comes before physical. We need what Jesus gave this poor man. We need healing of our souls that comes from sins forgiven. If it touches the body but doesn’t touch the soul, then healing won’t really last.

### **Do You Want To Be Healed?**

Do physical healings happen today? Yes! I know someone who experienced a physical healing from God, years ago and she’s still healed – it was a miracle. She had been injured in a sporting accident and was paralyzed from the waist down. She attended a Methodist camp meeting (they still have those in places like Georgia) where an evangelist prayed over her. I knew a pastor who was healed of his back ailment at a revival – for a time – but his pain and difficulty in walking came back. At my last church we prayed every Sunday after worship for two women in the congregation: one had heart ailments at an age you don’t normally expect to see such a thing, the other had a cancerous spot on her lung, though she’d never smoked nor lived around second-hand smoke. Why did one survive (and is still healthy today) and the other die? I do not know why some prayers for healing are answered and some are not. In the past ten years I have fervently and frequently prayed for physical healing for a loved one. Why haven’t my prayers for his physical healing been answered? I don’t know. But I know this: healing our sin sick souls is more powerful and lasting than healing even our bodies.

There’s a wonderful story in John (5:1-15) that brings this issue to the surface. Jesus had come to Jerusalem during one of the yearly feasts. Thousands of pilgrims were there from throughout Israel. While he was there, he paid a visit to a place called Bethesda, “house of mercy.” It was a pool with

porches around it, near the Sheep Gate in the northeastern section of the city. The Jews believed that an angel would come and periodically stir the waters. The first person to enter the water after it had been stirred would be healed of his diseases.

So hundreds of the sick and infirm gathered around the pool, waiting and hoping for the water to be stirred. On the day the Jesus passed by he met a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. When he found out how long the man had been paralyzed he asked only one question, *“Do you want to be well?”* At first it seems like a bizarre question. Why else would the man be there? Of course he wanted to be well. Was Jesus insulting his intelligence? No, not at all. He was asking a very serious question. He was asking because it was entirely possible that the man did not want to get well. Maybe he was making excuses for his condition, saying “every time the water is stirred, somebody else beats me to the water. No one will ever help me. Poor, poor, pitiful me.”

I think Jesus is probing the man’s will. He’s saying, “You can go on blaming others for your problems, yet I have the power to make you well. But I will not exercise my power until you decide you really want to be well. If I make you well, you can’t sit here and gossip all day. If I make you well, you can’t be a beggar anymore. If I make you well, you can’t use your illness to get special treatment at home. If I make you well, you won’t get all that sympathy anymore. There’s a price to be paid for being well. Do you want to pay it?”

The woman I mentioned earlier, who was healed of her sports injury, was asked by the evangelist who prayed for her, “Do you want to be healed?” I recall she said she was lying on her back on the porch of the cabin at that camp and he stood over her and asked her three times, “Do you want to be healed?” Sometimes it’s hard to answer that question truthfully isn’t it?

## **Love Can Heal**

The only medical doctor I can claim in my family is my great-great-grandfather, Elijah P. Burton, who was a regimental surgeon during the American Civil War, then a family doctor after the war. [One of my best friends (recently passed away) was a g. p. then an anesthesiologist. ‘Ofa has a first cousin who is a surgeon and was recently the Minister of Health for the country of Tonga. I did a semester in a training program at a hospital in the Bay Area and so learned a few things (I could tell you stories).] Like most, my interest in the “healing arts” has been prompted by a need for medical attention when I, or a family member, or others were sick, and then when recruiting medical professionals and arranging medical care for our mission trips to Tonga. “Healing arts” - that’s an apt phrase because healing truly is an art as well as a science (and a bit of a mystery). We are so blessed to live in a time and place where medical science has given us so much. But even with our doctors and nurses and all they can do, and even with all the latest technology and the newest drugs, healing still

comes from the Lord. That's why we pray for the sick. They may be healed by medicine or by surgery or by some other course of treatment or they may find healing through prayer or by a miracle from the Lord – or all of the above. All of those things are possible, and they are not mutually exclusive.

Consider that life itself is a miracle! The whole of creation and the known universe is a wonder to behold! When you consider the complexity of just our human bodies, it is a mind-boggling miracle how it all functions in harmony! That's why we notice, so painfully, when something isn't working right. Count each healthy day as a gift.

Even though we are a part of a fallen creation, where sin has broken our connection to the Source of life, God yet desires for us, and for all creation, health and wholeness, and for this we continue to pray for ourselves, for our loved ones, and for our world. We pray for God's kingdom to come in the bodies, and minds, and spirits, of those who are ill or injured, just as Jesus demonstrated in His healings. And even if that healing does not appear soon, we know that one day we will be made whole by God's power. People ask, "Do you believe in divine healing?" And the answer is: "That's the only kind there is, though it may come in different varieties." Good medicine and good prayer go together.

If you were sick and are now healthy, give thanks to the Lord. If your cancer is in remission, give thanks to the Lord. If you nearly died after an accident but somehow survived, give thanks to the Lord. If you've come through a period of bereavement, or come out of an addiction, or restored to a right relationship with someone in your life, give thanks to the Lord. If you're still struggling ask the Lord for healing in all areas of your life. Give thanks to the Lord for every bit of healing you experience.

Just remember that any physical healing in this life is limited and temporary. Our ultimate healing comes when we are raised immortal and incorruptible. In that happy resurrection day, when Jesus comes and the *"dead in Christ will rise first"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16), then at last we will be totally, completely, and finally healed once and for all.

*"God so loved the world..."* and *"with his wounds we are healed"* - the Lord's desire is for you to be whole – healed physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. Would you like to see healing in your body, your relationships, your family, your attitude, maybe even your bank account? Ask God to begin your spiritual healing today – that's the foundation. The healing of our families, our community, and our nation begins with your healing.

Jesus is saying, "Do you really want to be healed?" If the answer is yes, then miracles can take place. If the answer is no, then even Jesus cannot help you.

Some of you may hear these words and say, "He's right!" But it's not enough to agree with me. That's not the issue. Do you realize that to be healed

**of all your infirmities, especially those that are of a spiritual, emotional, or relational nature, will require you to change? Sometimes it's easier to stay the way you are. The Son of God is a perfect gentleman. He never barges into your life. He enters only by invitation. He will not begin your healing unless you want to be healed.**

**The power of God's love, a power that raised Jesus from death, can heal all your infirmities starting with your soul. And when your soul begins to heal you'll find healing in your relationships, your emotions, your mind, and in your body.**

***"Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases..." Psalm 103:2-3.***

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<sup>1</sup>"... I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security," Jeremiah 33:6. See also Isaiah 38:16 and 58:8, Malachi 4:2, Ezekiel 47:12.

<sup>2</sup> Read 2 Kings 5.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 38.

<sup>4</sup>See: Matthew 9:35. Much of chapter nine of Matthew's gospel is a report of Jesus' healings. Also Mark 1:39, Luke 5:15; 9:11 and Acts 10:38.

<sup>5</sup>"... and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" Luke 9:2. While Mark reports: "They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them" Mark 6:12-13.

<sup>6</sup> And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. Acts 9:34. Also Acts 4:22 and 1 Corinthians 12:9.