

“Healing”
Isaiah 40:21-31; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

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February 8, 2009

It's hard to go a movie these days with it being full of special effects. It seems like every movie you go to there's some kind of special effect added to it. Now sometimes, they kind of sneak it in, add it in so that as they're trying to tell the story and they just have something that works right along with the rest of the story. Sometimes you go and you know it's all special effects. It's basically a story of someone's imagination; they are trying to make it to look real. Now we might have lots of reasons we like those kinds of things. Perhaps it's a bit of escapism; we get to escape into another world. We get to change the world to make it the way we might want it to be, all kinds of things. We live in the special effects.

I was thinking about that as I was reading this particular scripture. It made me notice that as I read it, the first thing that stuck out was the miraculous, the healing. But as I read it I wondered if that was what my attention might best be on. If there wasn't something else here that was really the central point and I was getting caught up in the miraculous in this case. So as I look at it, I wondered. It's wonderful to hear about a healing and a casting out of demons, but Jesus doesn't even talk about it here. He never says a word about all that he is doing. He does tell us what he is about and it comes about in this interesting way. He's gone out to recharge his batteries, to pray, to get ready for the next steps he's going to take along the road, and here come the disciples. My sense is that they expect that he'll come back into town and do the things that he's been doing, may be set up shop and make it a place where people could come and be healed and have demons cast out. If I'd been his disciple, I would have been surprised when he said "Let's go on to the next village." He adds to that, "so I can take the message, proclaim the message there as well for that is what I've come out to do." So as I listen to Jesus it's almost like the healing and the casting out of demons are there almost as a consequence, or as a side effect of what he's about, not the central piece. He's come to show the message, to bring the message, the message of God, the Good News to God's people. That's what he's come to do. That's what he says.

So as I hear him say that I look back at this story again and ask so what do I see as I read it again, looking for Jesus' message in it. Remember, last week, the message he gave us was he began to proclaim repentance because God's kingdom is at hand, the season is right, the right time for turning to God, and noticing that God's kingdom is present. So as I look at this story, how do I see that in this story? How do I see that in what Jesus is doing? Well, the very first thing he does when He comes into Peter's house is care about the people who are there, particularly the one who is not well, Peter's mother-in-law. But I also notice, and it may be a little anachronistic at this point, but if Simon's mother-in-law was anything like my mother, and she had important guests coming in the house that day, what she would be worried about was not her fever, but to get up and be able to serve and take care, and do the things she does when somebody important comes into the house. You see what was really important to her, was not that her fever went away, but that she was able to join in the activities, to be a part of

what was going on, be part of that family. And isn't that what Christ's healing is really about? Healing us in a way that allows us to participate in the very family of faith that we are in? Jesus heals all those people in that town and it is a way of bringing them back in to community, bringing them together.

As I think about Jesus healing and how he brings those people together around that good news that God is present it makes me think of a bunch of balloons. You have a bunch of balloons and you know when they begin to lose some of their helium they float about half way up. And so if you had a bunch of those balloons kind of floating around, it's kind of like people, we float around. But if you hook them all together, you took a string and hooked them all together - say I took a string and hooked them all together and ran down the aisle, what would happen to those balloons? They would all come together and follow the string. It seems to me that's what Jesus is about as he brings God's love to us. It's that love that connects us all together and as we follow him, we're all brought together in a place of wholeness, like when he heals Peter's mother-in-law, to bring her in, to be part of that family of faith. He brings the message that it's time that we can come together. Why? Because the kingdom of God is at hand.

Sometimes I get into the mode that I'm either satisfied with the way things are and so I get almost complacent because everything's OK and I don't need to do anything or other times I am on the other extreme and nothing here seems right and the grass always seems greener on the other side. There's a way in which when Jesus enters in and pulls everyone together he's not saying you have to live in the past or live in the future, but you're pulled together in the present. It's not somewhere else, although there's hope that helps us for the future, and there's remembering the wonder of the past, he's really bringing us into the present, in a time when we know the kingdom of God is at hand, when living is not something we're thinking will happen in the future or has happened all ready but is something we do as we follow Christ and we love each other and we learn to do what he calls us to do and we let him take away the sin that shapes us and allow his guidance to shape us instead. Let the love of God shape us instead, let us be the very people of God. That is what he brings to us, that message, the Good News, that we too can be gathered together, that it's not something that is way off or way behind us, but it's here. God's present. We can turn to God. We can live following Christ. That's why Paul is so insistent on bringing the message because he has found it too, that as he follows Christ he is brought in and finds something wonderful and needs to share it. And what does he say when he is able to do that? Then he is able to share in the blessings of the Good News, it's that gathering together, holding us, calling us, leading us. I guess that's my prayer, that we listen, that we hear Jesus as he says turn to God, the kingdom of God is at hand, let the Good News be in our lives, and let the God that heals the broken hearted bring us hope in his steadfast love. May we let God bring us together and be a people who share the good news and in that share the blessings. Amen.