

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Healing Stories

What is the greatest gift someone could offer you?

Scripture: John 4:46-54

Rev. Steve Filyk

February 6, 2022

Opening Hymn: Hallelujah! Sing to Jesus

Chorus: The River

Communion Hymn: Behold the Lamb (Communion Hymn)

Closing Hymn: And can it be that I should gain

Communion Sunday

There is nothing that hits us harder than a health crisis.

We will go almost any distance
In a quest for our own healing.

My neighbor was diagnosed with cancer.

When local doctors were skeptical
About treating it with surgery,
He found willing professionals in Europe.

While he was recovering,
he took another trip to Mexico
To receive additional homeopathic treatments.

There is nothing that hits us harder than a health crisis.

We will go almost any distance
In a quest for our own healing.

But if this can be said about our own health and wellbeing,
It is all-the-more true
about the wellbeing of our children.

Most of us would go to the end of the world and back
To ensure the health and safety and wholeness of our children
And our grandchildren.

Just take a listen to Charlene's spiritual biography
That was released this past summer.
Charlene and Harold went through countless surgeries
With their kids...

PAUSE

Today's Bible reading continues
Our journey through the Gospel of John.

After a trip to Jerusalem (returning through Samaria),
 Jesus is back at Cana in Galilee
 Where he had performed his first miracle:
 Turning water to wine.

In Cana he is approached
 By a royal official from Capernaum.
 The man is likely a servant of "Herod Antipas."
 [who] was tetrarch of Galilee from 4 BC to AD39..."ⁱ

Keep in mind that Jesus would not have the fame
 That he has now.

It would be strange for such a person
 To journey to Cana in search of a would-be healer,
 The son of a carpenter.

All the more when you consider the distance.

This journey to see Jesus was more
 Than the sort of trip we might make
 To the local clinic.

"According to Google Maps,
 the distance from Cana to Capernaum,
 on currently existing roads, is 37.4 kilometres...

Google suggests that you can walk it in 7 hours and 40 minutes...

[But when you consider that]
 This route is in mountainous terrain,
 and Capernaum is approximately 200 metres (700 feet) below sea level.

[It would take much longer to get there
 Than to get back...]

It was strange that a royal official
 Would take on such a journey to search for Jesus.
 But he was desperate.
 His son was seriously ill."ⁱⁱ

This man travels to Cana.
 And when he finds Jesus
 He begs Jesus to come and heal his son.

You can imagine the people around them
 Stop and stare with anticipation
 When they see and hear this strange encounter:

A royal official pleading with a common carpenter.

Will this Jesus who somehow
 Supplied a wedding with wine in abundance,
 Perform another miracle?
 Could he perform a healing as well?

What Jesus says to the onlookers takes most of us aback.

He chides them:
 “Unless you people are dazzled by a miracle,
 you refuse to believe.”ⁱⁱⁱ

But the royal official continues to beg him:
 “Come down! It’s life or death for my son.”

And Jesus replies simply, “Go home. Your son lives.”^{iv}

The story goes on to tell us that the man takes Jesus at his word,
 And makes the journey back home to Capernaum.
 And that on his way back he is met by servants
 With good news that his son is well.

When they compare notes,
 they realise the child revived
 At the EXACT time
 Jesus has granted the request for healing.

And we are told that the royal official
 and his whole household believed.

The Gospel writer ends this story by telling us
 that this was Jesus’ second sign.

It is an exciting story.
 But it also invites some serious questions.

Does Jesus really want to heal the sick?
 I mean it is hard not to notice that
 Just like with his mom’s request
 to find more wine for the wedding,

That Jesus is somehow reticent to perform another miracle.

Jesus even chides the onlookers
 For wanting to see him act.

Does Jesus really want to heal us?

Does Jesus need to be pestered to help us?

Or is there an even better explanation?

I think there is a better explanation.

If you read through the Gospel of John

You'll find that the Gospel writer is very selective

In describing the acts of Jesus.

There are seven specific signs that are recorded.^v

John specifically mentions only four healings:

- Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum (John 4:46-54)
- Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:1-15)
- Healing the man blind from birth (John 9:1-7)
- The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45)

And aside from Jesus' resurrection only three miracles are described:

- Changing water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-11)
- Feeding the 5000 (John 6:5-14)
- Jesus walking on water (John 6:16-24)

John realises that he could have shared with us

Many other amazing acts of Jesus,

But like Jesus he realises that miracles and healings

are NOT Jesus' main mission.

Yes, Jesus is interested in our wellbeing.

Yes, Jesus wants to see us thrive.

Food and wine are blessings

And a healthy functioning body is an incredible gift,

But Jesus recognises that all these blessings
are temporal.

Jesus is focused on a gift

that is superior and lasting:

He wants to bring us into a right relationship with God.

Remember John's Gospel in a nutshell? John 3:16...

"This is how much God loved the world:

He gave his Son, his one and only Son.

And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed;
 by believing in him,
 anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

Jesus knows that for some,
 Signs and miracles can give birth to a believing relationship:
 We see this in the royal official and his household.

But for others these gifts are only entertainment,
 or distractions to the greatest gift of all.

How many of us
 Have spent our lives lamenting
 The absence of some particular gift?

- Wholeness in mind or body.
- The restoration of a broken relationship.
- Wealth or recognition.

We spend our lives searching for that gift,
 Begging God for that one thing
we think will make our lives complete.

We do this when the one thing
 That WILL make us complete has already been offered
 A restored relationship with our Creator and Savior:
 Life that is full and lasting with God.

PAUSE

I started serving my former congregation in Kerrisdale
 At approximately the same time a colleague
 Began his ministry in North Vancouver.

We were about the same age,
 Both married and without children.

During our time in these congregations
 Each of us was blessed with two beautiful daughters.

In many ways our lives were developing in parallel.

But after I moved here,
 I heard that his wife was not well:
 She had cancer.

It was a cancer that in his words was 'genetic'.

The tools of modern medicine could only fight it,
 But not defeat it.
 She would need chemo
 For the rest of her life.

The only real solution was a miracle.
 And so they were praying,
 they were searching,

Like the royal official they were begging for help.

They even met with some charismatics,
 Looking for a healing touch from God.
 That's right died in the wool Presbyterians
 Looking for help from their Pentecostal brethren.

They would do anything for her to be well again,
 So he could continue to enjoy his spouse,
 So their children would grow up with their mother.

But this wasn't God's plan.
 Heather wasn't healed in this life.
 She died after a difficult battle.

Some would see it as a tragedy I suppose...
 I can't imagine what it has been like for Martin
 And his girls...

But seen through a larger lens,
 We will all die someday.

Heather died, yet in life and death
 she was in a loving relationship
 with her Creator and Savior.

But she was never alone on her journey
 And she remains in God's hands forever.

She welcomed the gift
 That Jesus wants all of us to share:
 Faith, belief...

And this I believe has made a difference.
 May we know this gift in our own life.
 To God be the glory. Amen.

¹ D.A. Carson *The Gospel According to John* 238

² "John 4:46-54 Walking By Faith – Memos from God." 4 Feb. 2022, memosfromgod.com/john-446-54-walking-by-faith.

³ John 4:48 MSG

⁴ John 4:49-50 MSG

⁵ Contributors to Wikimedia projects. "Book of Signs - Wikipedia." 9 Nov. 2021, en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Book_of_Signs&oldid=1054263241.