



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula
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Sermon

Jesus Heals

Ps 103:1-5; Luke 13:10-17

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Not so long ago, we focused on Colossians 1 where Paul wrote:

Colossians 1:13-15 For he [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God ...

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. If you want to know what God is like look at Jesus – he is the image of the invisible God.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus healed a woman. That is entirely consistent with the Old Testament character of God.

I am the Lord who Heals You

A title God declared of himself is *Yahweh-Rapha*— "I am the Lord who heals you." After the Israelites had escaped from Egypt, God spoke to Moses and promised:

Exodus 15:26 "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

This name is a formal title of God: *Yahweh, Rapha*. That tells us it is of his very nature to heal.

Praise the Lord, O My Soul

In Psalm 103, David wrote:

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- who forgives all your sins and- heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion ...

David was telling his own soul to praise God. That is the will instructing the thoughts and emotions. Do you tell yourself to do things? Sometimes, we do that but don't follow through. Often our soul needs to be told what to do by our will. The order needs to be spirit – soul – body. Our spirit is in touch with God. From our spirit can flow the decision which instructs the soul what to think and say.

When times are tough, God remains the same but we feel down because of the opposition or bad circumstances we face. But David says to us that we need to decide to praise God regardless. And he gives us good reason to do it:

- He forgives all your sins,
- He heals all your diseases,
- He redeems your life from the pit;
- He crowns you with love and compassion.

Last week, I gave you some Bible promises. That is how you make use of them. You remind your soul of what God says about you in the Bible. You say them out loud. You persuade your soul of the truth of God's words so you can trust him in tough times.

God did not just make a promise to his people in Exodus, he revealed his character is to heal. And David tells us he heals all our diseases.

God is so good to his people! He forgives all our sins. That is what Jesus did for us on the cross – he dealt with the consequence of our sin, so God could forgive us in righteousness. Psalm 103 goes on to say that he removes our transgressions from us as far as East is from the West. Transgressions are when we go somewhere we should not have gone. When we cross a line, break a rule, when we sin. He has removed those from us – a bit? – quite a bit? – how far? As far as East is from the West. Let's say that out loud together:

Psalm 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

That's another promise you can learn and write into your promise sheet.

He redeems your life from the pit. The pit is a metaphor for the grave. To redeem is to buy back. Jesus is our redeemer, he has paid the price of sin so that death no longer means destruction to us. But in death we meet our Saviour. The fourth item is that God crowns you with love and compassion. This is a poetic way of saying he honours you with loving kindness and tender mercy.

The old hymn, "Praise my soul, the King of Heaven" by Henry Lyte is based on this Psalm. Do you remember how it goes?

Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven;
To His feet thy tribute bring!
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like me His praise should sing?
Praise Him! praise Him!
Praise the everlasting King!

Jesus Healing a Woman

If Jesus is indeed the image of the invisible God, we would expect to see in him the forgiving of sins, the healing of diseases, redemption and honouring us with loving kindness and tender mercy – and we do!

Jesus healed the woman in the synagogue who had been bent over for 18 years. That is a long time! It is a very long time! Think back to 2004 – that's 18 years ago. To be bent over for all that time. Wow!

Jesus discerned a spirit and dealt with it. Most of us would have assumed the woman just had a chronic disability and either thought it was too challenging to pray for or maybe prayed for some improvement. But Jesus used the spiritual gift of discernment, recognized that this particular disease had been caused by a spirit (the Greek says a spirit of infirmity) and set her free.

Jesus experienced opposition because they were concerned that he was breaking the Law of Moses by working on the Sabbath. He responded forthrightly, "You hypocrites!" I don't suppose they liked that either. But it gives us an idea of how strongly he felt. Perhaps significantly, Luke switches from referring to him as "Jesus" and calls him "the Lord" at this point. His words are authoritative and so it was appropriate

to call him “the Lord.” He argued that they release a donkey so it can drink on the Sabbath and so it was necessary for him to release the woman from her bondage on the day of rest.

As he did this he was moving in the power of the Holy Spirit and using some spiritual gifts.

Sometimes God gives an insight into a condition he wants to heal – that is called the Word of Knowledge. It is given to direct our prayers correctly and to raise faith that God does want to heal this condition.

Sometimes he gives someone insight as to the spirit which is at work in a person or a group of people, whether it is divine, human or something demonic. That is called the Gift of Discernment and we see Jesus using that gift in the gospel passage.

Having identified the cause of the crippled woman’s condition, Jesus used his authority to set her free from the spirit and healed the condition.

Far more often sicknesses do not have a demonic cause. They simply need healing.

A Current Example

Two months ago, I was visiting a resthome to take a communion service. I saw Allan who was in a wheelchair with a portable oxygen supply. I asked if I might visit him in his room and I went to pray for him.

It turned out that he was more concerned about a severe hernia that caused him pain. I simply prayed for his lungs and his hernia, commanding in Jesus’ name that the conditions would be healed.

To my surprise he announced that his left leg was tingling. I hadn’t known but he had no feeling in his legs and they were very weak. So we followed the lead we were given and switched to praying for the feeling to come back in his legs and then the strength. Over the next little while he regained normal feeling in his left leg and the considerable strength to push with his foot. Then since the right leg was still weak and numb, we prayed for that leg - and feeling and strength returned there too.

Allan was able to stand up and walk around without a walker or a stick. The next day, he told me that he walked down the long corridor to get his newspaper still without a stick or walker.

It is quite funny really, that I was earnestly praying for the hernia, when God healed his legs! However, that night the pain went from the hernia and he has been able to sleep without pain since then.

About a month later, he had to visit the specialist and he was wheeled to the door and then got up and walked across the consulting room to the patient’s chair unaided to the amazement of the doctor.

He has also tried taking off his oxygen feed for two hours successfully.

Allan wants to visit us here to give testimony – but due to his lung vulnerability needs to wait until it is safer for him to mix with people.

Now, let’s be clear, it was not my doing that Allan was healed – all I did was act in obedience to the general principle that God is the healer and pray for that healing. It is not under my control what happens. But as we step out in trust, we start to find that God honours our words which are in line with his and releases healings. Remember that Jesus sent the 70 disciples out to heal as recorded in Luke 10. They were not the 12 apostles, but an outer ring of followers – and they came back rejoicing about the healings and deliverances they saw.

Sometimes people are healed easily. Sometimes there are spiritual blockages to healing. In the example of the woman who was bent over, a simple prayer of healing would not have worked because there was spiritual power binding her. That needed to be dismissed before she could straighten up.

Another common blockage is unforgiveness. God takes unforgiveness very seriously and holding any one in unforgiveness makes it very difficult to be healed. We need to be determined to forgive any and everyone who has offended or hurt us.

Amazingly, that can even include forgiving ourselves. I have told you this before but it is worth repeating. Helen and I were at another parish's weekend camp teaching on healing. A group was praying for a young woman whose right arm was numb. They prayed and there was no change. Since it was a training situation, Helen came by to see how they were getting on. When she heard this, she asked the woman how long her arm had been numb. It was 18 years. Then she asked what happened 18 years ago. The answer was that the woman had been in a car accident and had been injured. Whose fault was it?

"My own," she said.

"Have you forgiven yourself?" Well, she had not ever thought to do that. So, Helen led her in praying a simple prayer forgiving herself for the causing the accident. They prayed again and the feeling came back in her arm!

If you want healing, please do ask for prayer – let's see what God may do in your life.

Fatherlike He tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame He knows.
In His hands He gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Praise Him! praise Him!
Widely as His mercy flows!