

The People Need Healing

The people need healing!

You need healing!

I need healing!

The public needs healing.

Into public health we must invest our wealth!—of wisdom, resources, energy and faith.

Now's the time to take of your personal health.

Please! Do not shortchange yourself!

In the gospels **of Mark, Matthew and Luke**, a common timeline of events in Jesus' ministry—which you heard Em read today in Matthew—speaks directly to our current situation.

Remember! These three gospels are called “synoptic gospels”—synoptic referring to the illumination that comes from **seeing them together**.

The power of three!

Must be God sending a spiritual text message to you and to me!

First, by the Sea of Galilee!

Jesus attracts a flash mob—so excited they push him off the beach.

He must retreat into a boat!

There, he stands speaking to the restless crowd on the shore.

Jesus tells a series of parables which suggest how—when we most need its healing power—the Kingdom of God arises in our lives and in our world.

The Parable of the Sower.

Then, the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed.

The Hidden Treasure .

The Woman Who Mixed Leaven into the Bread.

The Pearl Without Price.

The Miraculous Catch of Fish in a Net.

The crowd begins to get the idea.

Jesus provides more detail to the 12.

Soon after, terrible news arrives.

Jesus' spiritual mentor John the Baptist has been murdered by the nation's Ruling Family.

Jesus and the disciples set off across the Sea of Galilee in a boat.

They land on a far shore.

Jesus retreats to pray.

Agitated and grieving, like crowds we have seen and been a part of this year, the people gather and follow him.

In a deserted place they find Jesus and rejoin him.

But there's nothing to eat!

One of the disciples, Andrew, manages to find a local boy who has 5 loaves of bread and two fish, which, as Jesus blesses them—miraculously becomes enough to feed the hungry crowd.

Later, Jesus asks the crowd to leave so he can pray.

He asks the disciples to take the boat and row back to the opposite shore.

While Jesus prays, a storm blows up on the sea.

Jesus sees the disciples' boat foundering!

It's about to sink!

The disciples are in a total panic!

Jesus goes down to the shoreline, heads the water— they into the water.

The disciples see him walking on the water toward them, and are somewhat calmed.

He climbs into the boat with them, and they are able to reach the opposite shore.

Lastly, we find ourselves on the sea's western shore , beyond it lies a fertile farming area known as Gennesarett.

Word gets around that Jesus is there.

People realize who he is.

They have heard of his reputation as a healer.

They begin bringing lots of people.

More and more of them, all the time, come to him to be healed.....PAUSE

Although every step on this timeline is a drama in and of itself—recall that when Rev Fred Shuttlesworth's house exploded under the force of dynamite ignited by the Ku Klux Klan, and his church deacons found him wandering around the yard looking for his slippers, they told the newspaper reporters it was though they had seen Jesus walking on water—

Still I think we would all quickly recognize the final scene in the timeline in our situation today.

Growing numbers of people hurt—wounded— sick— traumatized and in need of healing.

Just being alive today leaves you exposed to and wounded by—

The Covid-19 pandemic! –a global and local catastrophe.

Rolling waves of mounting infections and deaths, with a dangerous winter just beginning.

White Supremacists brandishing threatening weapons and cooking up violent plots against present and former elected officials.

So many of us struggling to keep our heads above water with respect to our own mental health and peace of mind.

Racism in police departments with no vaccine in sight to stop its spread.

A shaky economy! With no new stimulus yet in sight!

A government official who is about as far from being radical as Pluto is from Planet Earth, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said last Thursday:

“Inequality holds the economy back.

“Even after the unemployment rate goes down and there's a vaccine, a substantial group of workers are going to need support as they find their way in the post-pandemic economy.

For example, lower-paid workers, as well as those in jobs requiring face-to-face interactions, such as retail or restaurant workers, will shoulder most of the burden of this shift.

These groups, heavily skewed towards women and minorities, have already been among those most affected by pandemic layoffs.’ Powell said.

The post-pandemic economy is also at risk of being less productive: women have been forced to quit their jobs due to child care responsibilities during the crisis, and children aren't getting the education they deserve.

We're recovering, but to a different economy.”

The people—our people—you and me—need healing.

All of these problems together are a public health problem to solve.

Everyone needs healing.

The earth needs healing.

The sky needs healing.

The trees and rivers and the animals and the bees and butterflies need healing.

You need healing.

I need healing.

Let me first suggest a possible **personal** path through this thicket.

Let the healing begin with you—and with me.

Here's how!

Go....deep!

By going deep, I mean—begin to discover or re-discover the unique, unrepeatable, original identity within you that makes you—YOU!

I don't mean your social identity, or your racial identity or gender or ethnic identity.

Or your work or your marital status or age or your birth order in your family, or what you see when you look at your driver's license.

I mean the private, distinctive, one and only self which—even if you were the only living being in the universe—would still exist—and you could call out and claim it—in the face of the vast and far flung, deep space—I AM.

I AM WHO I AM!

It's me. It's me. It's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer!

Despite all that has swept you under or lifted you above or stood in your way, wounded you, carried you—even where you did not wish to go—there is something both specific and eternal about this I AM who YOU ARE.

Here is the Deep Source of all your healing.

Here you will find the flowing, emerging spiritual Energy for your recovery from whatever happens to you.

Some call this soul and, as a result, salute the Soul of the Universe—God—for being the Ultimate Source of All Souls.

Go deep! Find the deep healing power within your original, unrepeatable you—ness.

You might have to travel there by praying.

Be still and know that I am God!

You might travel there by singing!

By sharing with one other person your story!

You might need Beauty to accompany you.

You might Jesus to walk with you....and Jesus will walk with you.

But once you go there, and you begin to become whole, which is what the healing process is....you are bringing together what has been torn apart, ripped asunder, wounded and hurt—**something else can also begin to happen.**

You find the experience of others in your own experience.

When you go down deep into yourself, you come up inside the experience of every other living person—and you begin to see their life in yours and your life in theirs.

When you “Know thyself.” As Socrates said, and the Oracle at Delphi before him...

You have seen your sister.....

Thou has seen thy brother.....

The healing of all nations, as the Bible puts it— begins.

The healing of all peoples begins when we travel into this realm of human solidarity—

—and our solidarity with the trees, the four leggeds, the sky, rivers and so on.

At this point, we begin to care not only about our own health and healing, but also about the public health and the people’s healing.

Our mission then becomes clear.

We are called to make repairs.

Mend the torn fabric of our social life.

Rebuild the broken walls.

Make amends for the harm that has been done.

What if?—What if?—

We began to think of the multiple problems, predicaments and puzzles with which we are contending—as public health problems!

The virus for sure!

But also unemployment.

Affordable, accessible individual health care—without which public health is not possible.

Gun violence as a public health problem.

Racism and anti-blackness a public health problem.

Food insecurity.

Mental health.

All the issues around climate change, from its effects on all living beings—and the effects of doing something about it—the way in which fossil fuel related workers and families' livelihoods are threatened.

What if it were all seen as public health?

And thus the urgency with which the people need healing!

In the end, the ministry of Jesus is a ministry of healing reconciliation—to oneself and to others.

Jesus recognized that underneath all divisions, all contradictions, all conflict—there is a hidden, synthesizing energy!

A divine undertow, if you will—pulling us in a direction of the Kingdom if we will relax and let ourselves be carried by its power.

It's the glad tidings delivered by the Christmas angel.

It's the song of Aslan the Christ-like lion, singing Narnia into existence.

It's the Spirit moving across the chaotic waters of creation

It's the healing unity of the God process, operating often out of sight, yet like invisible gravity, pulling all things, including your life—toward into its Loving Power.

Will you pray with me?

God, our people need healing.

Each one of us needs healing, Jesus!

Show us how to make a way out of no way!

We will follow You. Amen.

Healing is both a physical process and a non-physical, spiritual process.

How healing happens is both knowable and unknowable. A paradox.

Wounds closing is knowable.

White blood cells fight and gradually defeat viruses, infections and other foreign invaders of the body.

Tissue regenerates itself.

Physical therapies strengthen.

Antibiotics and other medicines work.

The process by which one melts resentments and regrets—reclaims the power to love—climbs out of despair— manages to mediate one’s own rage—remains buoyant amidst depression—turns fear into faithfulness—is less knowable.

Or not knowable at all.

Even a complete mystery that may never be known because its source is the Loving Wisdom of God.

Healing is like a hidden spring in the Ozarks which pours forth with constant, quiet power, and we only have to dip our souls in its refreshing waters.

Or healing is like loving touch that connects one soul to another—connects two souls to the Divine Energy of God.

Isn’t touch part of the healing process?

That the people who came to Jesus on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee wanted to “touch the hem of his garment” as the gospel passage puts it—is vivid evidence of the power of touch that so many of us are familiar with today.

Through the power of loving touch, you may become the Healing Love of God to one other yearning person who is recovering from surgery, alone at home, grieving at a funeral, or even a baby in a hospital.

How this happens is not easily known. “God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform”— as the hymn line puts it.

Along with the power of touch, Jesus also knew that trust had something to do with healing.

Trust that I can be healed!

Faith that healing is possible!

So many of the surgeries we undergo—or treatments we decide upon—or therapeutic regimens we undertake—require an act of faith and trust on our part if they are to be successful

Now I know that is not true in all cases. In lots of cases, the medical facts are what they are no matter what you think or believe or hope or pray. In over thirty-five years of ministry, some of the most painful visits I ever made, over at least a year’s time in each instance, were to two men around the age of 50 whose cancers, once they were discovered, were fatal no matter what surgeries and treatments were done. We prayed and prayed and prayed together, before, during and after surgeries and treatments, and they both died within a year or less. I do think that Darryl and Bill died with hope and with faith. And I think they found inner peace. And I know they found some spiritual and emotional healing as they died, but faith did not save them from their diseases.

On the other hand, faith plays a big part in recovering from a heart attack or a broken hip or many chronic illnesses such as diabetes, obesity, alcoholism, chronic pain and so many others.

In these kinds of illnesses, if one doesn’t have faith that healing is possible, or if one has a negative attitude, or a hopeless attitude, in fact healing probably won’t be very possible.

We know that prayer and faith help in healing. We know singing and meditating and reading the scriptures and looking up at the star studded heavens and listening to ocean waves pound the shore and listening to the water trickling in a brook and that being led by still waters and lying down in green pastures—all serve to cause the healing process to unfold.

And healing is a process, is it not? I am sure most doctors will tell you that even with all their medicinal and surgical miracles and wonders, in the end, it is the body that must heal itself. It is the body that must mend within. And likewise, if we ventured over into the field of psychiatry and psychotherapy where they deal with the wounds and illnesses of the mind it would be said that after all the medications and treatments, in the end, it is the mind or the psyche that must heal itself, become integrated, or whole.

I'm going to have a play professionally produced and staged here on this very spot early next year, whose subject is two young people seeking healing from new and old wounds. The play is called "The Moon's Language" and features two characters, an interracial couple, and they meet up to run together on two nights, first at a track and then on a river road.

Because the set is simple and with only two characters, and it's dark early enough here in the winter, the play can be performed here, with nine performances in February and March—AND to reach as many people as possible it will be free admission with donations appreciated, as some of our other successful arts events and arts and spirituality events have been.

I love this play for its personal healing story and for the larger story of healing with respect to race and to dimensions of the current human predicament that would be a spoiler if I went into it here.

Like the great founder of abstract expressionist painting, Vassily Kandinsky, I believe that **spirit creates art**, and that that spiritual process creates healing in those who are touched, reached, engaged by the music, the dance, the theatre, the writing—the worship service!—for worship **is** an art as well and most obviously has the Spirit of God as its source and driving energy.

I suspect this understanding is the secret to Jesus' healing power, and why people who were just around him—listened to him— touched him—and prayed with him—found deep healing.

As an **auditory illustration** of this Christ healing process, I'd like to play for you a song whose Bible text I referenced earlier, "*She Touched the Hem of His Garment*". This is a recording by the one and only Sam Cooke and the Soul Stirrers". If you've never heard Sam Cooke, I suggest you use your internet search skills to find other You Tube videos of his beautiful art. (I'm going to project most of the song lyrics on the screen to enhance the auditory illustration.....

What if the the joyful healing story in that gospel song became your story?

And when it does become your story—and you begin to learn its secret for yourself, you could make a contribution to the healing that our human community so desperately needs at this time.

In the early Christianity, the Greek word for church was "Ecclesia"

Eccleisa means "called out".....called out of ordinary life into holy life.

Today, we are *called out* to be healers.

Healers of ourselves.

Healers in our families and friendships.

Healers in our community.

Healers in our city.

Healers in our world.

White supremacy, the alt right, says that diversity, immigration, creating global community is a plot to somehow destroy the white race.

God supremacy and "right" in the Bible. suggests that we all come from the same mother and the same father— and that from that same mother and same father, we have constantly migrated and we continue to migrate—and

immigrate—and emigrate—and, yes, there are too many of us for one planet, but we are what we are and it is what it is.

We still have to heal our overpopulated, suffering, warring, desperate global community in the condition we are currently in.

We all need to reach out together and touch the hem of Jesus' garment....and become whole.

Amen.

Rev. Scott Myers

Westport Presbyterian Church

August 20, 2017

