

I BELIEVE! HELP MY UNBELIEF**Mark 9:14-29**

Intro: In April Pastor Paul Pawelski, the Director of Memorial Holiness Camp asked me to speak at the Tuesday morning communion/healing service at Camp on the morning July 8 – and of course I had to say yes. At the end of June, after a busy couple months, made more so by the fact that I was filling in for Bishop Lynn who was on sabbatical, I finally got around thinking about what I would preach about. I was assuming that it would be a communion sermon, but that was what Pastor Paul was thinking. This is what he was thinking:

“I think the healing message is more unique. Why do we ask God for healing, how does God answer, how can we tell God hears us, do we decide or does God get to decide how and when he heals us, is healing only for physical injuries or can we pray for anxiety and relationships etc., does seeking healing mean we believe in the prosperity gospel, can we glorify God while persevering through a condition he does not instantly heal, will we be healed in the life after death, if we don't know how God will answer - is there any use in praying, is it our faith that heals us or God's power and His choice, how should we celebrate His healing power he gives us even when he does not heal us of every undesirable condition, etc? Does that give you enough to talk about for 20 minutes?”

I thought to myself, “*No problem, Paul! I'll just turn the record player from 33 rpm up to 45 rpm and talk fast.*” What I actually did was Google “Scriptures about healing” and I found all sorts of topics – many from health and wealth preachers who guarantee healing for a \$60 “gift” to the ministry (which is more likely for fuel for the executive jet) or from reformed people discounting all the health and wealth people and their teaching. Then I came across “10 Key Verses on Healing” from Crossway and I was in business! Actually, I was blest, because we're going to look at them in a bit because they are anointed and full of truth and hope.

First some background:

It goes without saying, the past three years have been tough ones for ABC. Not because we have had strife or doctrinal issues or money problems, but because we have struggled with grave illness, terminal illness, and the loss that comes with it. We watched dear ones like Jewel and Keith and Norm and Ron and Cheryl and others struggle with cancer and then be called into eternity. Then in March of this year Leia Ringler experienced a minor surgery gone horribly wrong and that precipitated a six week touch and go struggle and then another 20 weeks of slow but steady progress. We have prayed and prayed and prayed for Leia. We have seen God's hand at work and we have seen miracles. In fact one of the miracles is the growth of Aaron as he has been faithfully by her side from the very beginning – showing us, in a powerful way, what “In sickness and in health” truly means.

God is at work. Could he have healed Leia, immediately? Of course. In fact he could have prevented it in the first place – but he didn't – instead he allowed it for some reason, beyond our limited thinking. And this we know, his healing is best and much more thorough than anything we can think of.

Now, each of these cases it has seemed that God was not hearing our prayers, or at least he wasn't responding. And I'm sure, for all of us there have been other times when we have been amazed by God's healing power.

What's the difference? Why healing some people sometimes and not others? Well, it seems that God is teaching us regardless of what the outcome is, and most of all he is looking for us to look to him.

Let's look to him now by looking into his word, Listen: **(Read Mark 9:14-29)**

In this wrenching passage we detect varying emotions coming from those who are seeking healing. We even see it from Jesus as he seemingly casts aspersions on the lack of faith of those around him. Then comes a cry from an anguished father “*I believe! Help me in my unbelief!*” And Jesus healed his son. Jesus answered the honest prayer of a desperate dad.

Afterward, his disciples asked him, “*Why couldn't we do that?*” And his reply was “*This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.*” Mark 9:29. But, let me add this, this kind can only be healed by Jesus, because only Jesus can heal. The disciples were trying on their own power – and that never works. Healing comes from God, and God alone.

Now, let's look at 10 scriptures that talk about the various kinds of healing available to the child of God. We will briefly cover each one and make some comments. Hopefully we'll know more about healing and what God intends for us to learn this morning.

This is going to be a marathon run through the Bible – so here we go

First, Psalm 103:2-5: Listen,
*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all our iniquity, and heals our diseases God is interested in our healing. But notice this: Healing isn't just from disease as much as it is healing from the disease of sin. The first thing the Psalmist mentions here is that God forgives **ALL** our iniquity, and then, **AND THEN**, he heals our disease. It's interesting that when Jesus healed, the first thing he would often say was *"Your sins are forgiven,"* and then he might say *"Rise and be healed"* This is what happened in Mark 2 with the man who had been lowered to him through the roof. He looked at the man lying on the palette and said *"Your sins are forgiven."* and then he healed the man's body. God is interested in our spiritual affliction and he cares about that before he deals with our physical affliction.

Now look at 3 John 2. It's a very simple greeting at the opening of a letter. Listen, *Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.*

The apostle is greeting his readers, and he is simply wishing them good health. It's a nice thing to include in a letter and we probably have used it in a similar way: *"Dear Jeffrey, I hope this letter finds you well."* John was doing that very thing here. But he's also, once again, concerned about the health of their souls. In truth he is saying to them, *"I pray that you may be in good health, even as it goes well with your soul."* God wants us well, and he especially wants our soul to be well too.

Then we have this in Acts 3 which begins with Peter and John healing a man as they walk into the temple. It unfolds as they are confronted with a crippled beggar who asked them for a few coins but Peter responds with, *"I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"* And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Acts 3:6-7. But, instead of being overjoyed at a healing, the religious leaders were angry at the apostles for healing the man and for teaching about Jesus. Peter and John are actually brought to trial for this, and their response is wonderful, I'm paraphrasing, but what they say is, essentially, this: *"Yes, we hear what you're saying, but we need to preach what we hear coming from God."* Then in chapter 4 as the people of God are praying to be his witnesses in the midst of these threats, they pray this: *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* Acts 4:29-30

They have been flogged and jailed and threatened and still their prayer is for the Lord to grant more opportunities for his servants to speak his word with all boldness – and as they do their part they are, in confidence, asking him, ***While you stretch out your hand to heal.*** This prayer of faith resulted in signs and wonders – from the people of God! This is what boldness brings! God stretches out his hands to heal through his servants. As we pray with expectancy, the Lord responds.

Next is another familiar passage that we often use for a healing service here at ABC or if I go to a home or hospital room of a sick person, with a vial of oil in my pocket, I read this: *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.* James 5:14-16

James says, "Is anyone among you sick? Then, do this." and then he covers it all. He talks about suffering, he talks about cheerfulness, and he talks about the healing of sickness. And notice that it is to be done in community with the leaders of the church praying together. This is what we're doing here this morning, and that's good because the prayer of a righteous person is very effective and healing happens. Let me point out

something that is important: Healing is in the name of the Lord, and not from the oil that is used. What it comes right down to is that it's the name of the Lord that heals and the oil reveals our obedience. In the same way that baptism is an outward sign of an inward change, receiving the oil is an act of obedience.

Next, listen to this beautiful passage: *But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.* Malachi 4:2

This is a sweet verse for me personally. As you know, I have struggled with chronic back pain. All those times when I was a kid and I jumped out of a tree or off of a roof or jumped my bike over a creek, or lifted something that was too heavy because I was a manly man, well, now I'm paying for it. But I watch my grandkids run and play in the yard, with Fiona doing cartwheels and bridging backwards with her hands and feet on the ground and it hurts me inside just to watch. At the same time this verse from Micah gives me hope for the future, when I will experience healing. I'm talking about the healing of heaven where we will be healed and we will be dancing around the field like a happy little calf. I look forward to that. More on that in a bit.

Listen to the Psalmist,

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted

and saves the crushed in spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous,

but the Lord delivers him out of them all. Psalm 34:18-19

The Lord loves both those who trust in him and those who don't. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 5 that it rains on the just and the unjust. So, it stands to reason that Godly people will suffer. Both Godly people and ungodly people suffer but the righteous are healed, eventually and ultimately. The promise is there in verse 19 *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all*

Now, listen to this from the beginning of Jesus's earthly ministry: *And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.* Matthew 4:23-25

Jesus went along healing every disease and every affliction. Okay, when we hear the word "disease" we pretty much know what that is. It's anything from a sore throat to pancreatic cancer. But what's an affliction? Well, I believe that sin is what God is in the business of healing and his promise to us is that he heals all of our physical concerns, our spiritual concerns, our aches, our tumors, our sins and our demons. He will heal every disease and affliction.

Next we have this from Peter: Listen, *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* 1 Peter 2:24

Suffering, for a Christ follower, is different from suffering in people who do not follow him. A Christ follower's faith in God and God's promises gives hope that is not possible for a non-believer. Now, imagine the hopelessness of someone who faces terminal illness alone, without belief. There's a huge difference and it should fill our hearts with compassion to share with them the hope we have within us. (. . . *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,* 1 Peter 3:15)

There is a similar thought in Isaiah 53 which you heard earlier. Listen to verse 5 again:

But 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. Isaiah 53:5

Christ's suffering brought our healing. Once again, this is a spiritual thing. We're having a healing service this morning, and we must know that healing is for so much more than physical concerns. Jesus suffered and his stripes were for our healing – of all affliction.

Finally this, from Revelation: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne*

saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Revelation 21:1-5

Many of you remember how, a little less than 10 years ago, Danny Krispinsky, a young husband and beloved AU women’s soccer coach was diagnosed with cancer. He fought it valiantly but he lost the battle and he was only 35 when he died on in January of 2019.

Fast forward to a couple years ago, when after an early morning breakfast with Jason at the Downtown Perk, I decided to take my morning walk in town rather than going right home. My stroll took me though Ashland Cemetery which is great place to walk. It was a crisp fall day and the autumn leaves were at their peak and even though I was walking among gravestones, I marveled the beauty of the day. As I walked I found it really interesting to read the tombstones. All the way at the end of the cemetery, which is quite a walk, I came upon a small, immaculately white stone with Daniel Krispinsky’s name across the top, and years of his life etched into it, and I was reminded again of how young he was when he died. But the short scripture across the bottom from Revelation 21 was what caught my eye and moved my heart. It said this, *BEHOLD. I AM MAKING ALL THINGS NEW* Rev. 21:5.

His young wife, in faith believing that her husband was a new creation in heaven, hung her hat on the promise that God is making here in Revelation. God is in the process of making all things new. That's the promise we need to hang on as we pray for healing. As we pray, and pray, and pray, never forget that God is the one who heals and he has healing in his wings, and he has our healing in mind. His desire is to make all things new, and that means his healing will be perfect. Amen