

## The Healing Touch

Text: Isaiah 40:21-31

1 Corinthians 9:16-23 (Series B, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany) Ps.147:1-11, 20

Mark 1:29-39

*He went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up.*

*The fever left her, and she began to wait on them.*

Let us prayer:

Today's message deals with the subject that is dear to my heart and that is healing of: **Mind, Soul, and Body**. Jesus is called to the bedside of Simon's mother-in-law. She has a fever. You might say that a fever is not a serious condition. That maybe the case in these days of modern medicine but in Jesus' times to have a fever was a serious matter - it could be fatal!

Jesus could have easily said, *"I came to preach about the Kingdom of God."* But watch what happens. He goes to Simon and Andrew's home. He tenderly takes the sick woman by the hand, helps her up, the fever leaves her, and she serves them coffee, and some *homemade lemon pie*. Jesus' touch brings the gift of wholeness - then and now!

Mark, the gospel writer puts together a picture of what kind of a person Jesus really is. Even though it was unlawful to heal on the Sabbath, Jesus worked probably late into the night as the sick were brought to him from near and far. People saw in Jesus someone who was more concerned with people than anything else. Here is a man with a heart. A heart full of love, grace, mercy, and compassion.

Mark is not simply telling us a nice story about someone with fever who got healed. He is telling us something about what kind of person Jesus is, not only for the people of his time, but for people, of all generations.

These stories that are retold to us from earliest account continue to be the same good news that is on the move in our times and lives. The *compassion* of Jesus is in his touch.

Our God is the one who reaches out to those who have any kind of need - he touches them with his healing hand. He touched the mother-in-law of Simon Peter, he reached out and touched the sick and the possessed who came to be healed. He touched the eyes of the blind and ears of the deaf. He touched those who knelt before him and raised them to their feet saying, "*Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace!*"

Jesus reaches out and touches us with his healing power. He touches us on the head with water at our Baptism and makes us his own children. He touches our ears with his Word of hope and assurance. When we are depressed, upset, discouraged or grieving he touches us with his comforting Word.

The assurance that he will not abandon us in our troubles and the promise that he will always be our refuge and strength in times of trouble. He touches our consciences with words of forgiveness and the sign of the cross. He touches us with bread and wine and the real body and blood of Jesus that we eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins.

The Hebrew Scripture reading from Isaiah 40 reading this morning is a song about the greatness of God. It concludes with *this wonderful words* of reassurance and comfort telling us that even though God is the all powerful God who "*stretched out the sky like a curtain*", created the stars, and reduces powerful rulers to nothing, God is a God who touches the lives of people with his love and compassion. Isaiah says,

Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the everlasting God; he created all the world. He never grows tired or weary. No one understands his thoughts. He strengthens those who are weak and tired. Even those who are young grow weak; young people can fall exhausted. But those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak (40:27-31).

There are times in our lives when our own strength is exhausted. There are those times when we are either emotionally, physically or spiritually drained, or perhaps all three at once. Isaiah uses words like "**weary**", "**tired**", "**weak**", and "**exhausted**". There comes a limit to what we can endure as human beings. Jesus talks about those who are "*weak and carrying heavy-burdens*".

- ❖ We can feel weary for all kinds of reasons.
- ❖ We feel weary because there is tension at home or in our work place.
- ❖ We are weary from some kind of illness that seems to go on and on.
- ❖ We are tired and exhausted because of unhappiness in our family, because we have lost someone dear, or because our finances are rock bottom.
- ❖ We are crushed by the guilt of having given in again and again to temptation.
- ❖ We are feeling weary and tired because of old age, and we not are as strong as we used to be.

Isaiah is speaking to **tired, weary, weak, exhausted**, people like some of us this morning. He tells us about a God who reaches out, God touches us in our tiredness and weariness.

**He strengthens those who are weak and tired.... Those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.**

God reaches out and touches our lives and gives us a strength that is beyond what we can muster up. There is strength in knowing that we don't have to go at it alone, that we are never forgotten or ignored!

We have a very special friend - Jesus - who watches over us at all times, care for us at all times, and who is open to having us come and speak to him in prayer at all times. He loves us! He forgives us! He will stand by us! He gives us something to hang on to and somewhere to turn even in the darkest moments in our lives!

As Isaiah said: "*Those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed.*" Or as the apostle Paul writes, "*I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength*" (Phil 4:13).

A lot of what happens in our lives is a lot like playing *Chopsticks* in a concert hall. The problems and the troubles we encounter exhaust us. Some times when we are ready to give up, the Lord comes along and leans over our shoulder and whispers in our ear, "Don't quit. Keep going. I'll help you. Don't listen to the noise of discouragement." And in that moment, Jesus' presence, his love, his touch changes everything.

Christ is no longer visibly present with us as in the days of the disciples, but that does not mean that the touching presence of Christ is no longer here in our world. This touching goes on today because Christ lives in us and is present with us as we reach out to those around us.

God touch comes through our visit to the person in a ***hospital bed***, or in a ***nursing home***, the ***shut in***, the ***lonely***, through our words of encouragement and prayers. God touch reaches out to the person in ***prison*** loaded with all kinds of problems, and he uses our help and support to ease their anxiety and depression.

God touches those who are burdened with a heavy conscience as we tell them of the wonderful liberating word of forgiveness in Christ. God touch comes through an adult's care for a shy child who needs warmth and gentle encouragement.

God touch is felt as people help and comfort those overburdened with life's problems. If any of you have been troubled by anxiety, difficult decisions, overpowering problems and have experienced the ***kindness*** and ***compassion*** of a friend, you will know what it means to have someone reach out to you. If this has been your experience then you have experienced the *healing touch* of Jesus through that person.

Many years ago, during one of life's transitions, I found myself in a situation way beyond my control. As the saying goes my world came apart from the seams. I was so depressed, that I shut myself off from people, I refused to be comforted. It was a dark moment for me, I must say.

A Christian friend of mine called after several weeks and said: Sammy "Let's go for a walk." And she told me about her own hurts and disappointments, she prayed with me and encouraged me with words of the prophet Isaiah 40:31

**They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength;  
The shall mount up with wings as eagles;  
they shall Run, and not be weary;  
and they shall walk, and not faint.**

She gave me a card with the Words of the prophet Isaiah 40:31 which I have just read, I carry it with me since 1978. It has reminded me over the years the power of God's Word, when I am discouraged. Christ has taken us by the hand and raised us to new life so that we might love and serve him.

During my return trip from Ghana, I had a layover of nine and half hours in Amsterdam. In the transfer hall (*A Chines traveler sitting next to me without a winter jacket at Amsterdam Airport Friday 2, 2024*).

We need to be available: we are his **hands**, his **feet**, his **lips**, his **eyes** and **ears**. God reaches out to others through us, and through us touches people and makes them whole. ***I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.*** (1 Corinthians 9:22b-23)

God grant us the compassion and the desire to reach out and touch those in need with the love of Christ. Through His Word and the Sacraments God touches our sin diseased lives and makes us well and new with the forgiveness won for us on the cross of Calvary.

**May the peace of God, which passes all understand,  
keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Amen.**