

Three Thoughts on Jesus and Healing from Luke Knight

Last Sunday we looked at Luke 5.12-16 where Jesus heals a man with leprosy and then tells him to keep the miracle to himself. Because our time on Sunday together is limited the many questions about healing and miracles that might have sprung to mind may have gone unanswered. And because I know many in our church have faced or are facing suffering, I felt it important to add a little more to the discussion. I don't have all the answers, but I know how much damage can be done when we end up off track on these sorts of topics or are insensitive toward one another.

I attempted to share some insights into what was going on in Luke 5.12-16 and in other scenes in the Gospels relating to Jesus' miracles of healing. I don't believe these reflections answer all our questions about miracles and healing today, though I do believe they help us on our way in understanding **the character in the middle of them, which is essential**. If we don't get Jesus right we'll end up going in strange directions in our thinking about God. So, it's important we start there. However, I am sure many in our community will no doubt have prayed for healing and not received it, or perhaps have! Though our thinking may vary about miracles and healing (and there's certainly room in our community for variation) I would venture three further thoughts on the subject that might bring clarity to some basic biblical perspectives on personal physical healing. They may not help you, but they have helped me and have been passed down by other loving pastors, teachers and mentors.

First, **God is gracious and Jesus himself tells us we can ask for things in his name and expect to receive good gifts from a good Father (John 14.13, Luke 11.11)**. So, whenever I pray with people I simply ask for that - I appeal to God's good character like a simple child and ask for healing and wholeness. After that, it's up to God. It's not up to how much "faith" I work up into some kind of weird frenzy. Another good and perhaps more helpful word for faith is trust. We trust God together and leave ourselves in God's hands. That is what our faith is about, a deepening trust in the one who made us. As we learned earlier in Luke's gospel we follow Jesus in trusting God without conditions.

This leads me to a second thought: what happens if we don't experience healing as we'd like? **It would seem that even the heroes of the New Testament didn't always get what they asked for**. Think of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, for example. A giant of the faith and yet even Paul suffered (what with exactly we don't know but it does appear to be some kind of physical or mental affliction). For Paul the path to further life was through suffering, and that of course should remind us of Jesus. The night before his death Jesus asked the Father to remove the cup of suffering he was to drink (Luke 22) and Jesus ends up drinking what he obviously would rather have avoided - going to his death on the cross. "Not my will, but your will" we hear Jesus say. This is the kind of trust Paul was modelling to the Corinthians. So, although these examples don't provide answers to our specific situations they do remind us that if we are suffering we're not suffering because we've done something wrong, or God doesn't love us, or we aren't praying hard enough. Many times suffering and holiness, at least it seems biblically, somehow go together. **Just because we don't experience healing right now does**

not mean we aren't holy or connected to God. In fact, we may be more connected to God than we realize (just ask a mature Christian who has suffered with chronic pain or has faced the death of a child, and I can point you toward several who would gladly share their experience of a deepening and lively faith in the middle of all that pain). As Paul heard God say “my grace is enough for you...my power made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12)

That brings me to a third thought. Part of the hope of heaven is wholeness and healing for all of God's creation, and **any miracle of healing is pointing toward that future reality**. So, even if we don't experience healing and wholeness exactly as we'd like right now, that is our eternal future in and with Christ (Revelation 21.4). Healing and wholeness beyond imagination is the great Christian hope, and indeed all of creation's.

Thanks for reading and please be encouraged today by the enduring words of Jesus to the man with leprosy in Luke 5. God never recoils but always reaches and reconnects; God always says “I am willing”. Let us hear those words not just today but onward into the future hope of heaven given us through Jesus' death and resurrection. My prayer for you today is that you would know the wholeness and peace of Christ that mysteriously goes beyond understanding.

Every blessing!

Luke