

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, *"Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed."*

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, *"Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed."*

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, *"Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed."*

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, *"Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed."*

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, *"Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed."*

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Towson Presbyterian Church

A Service of Healing & Wholeness

January 21, 2018

Isaiah 40: 21-23, 28-31 and Mark 1:40-45

“Healing...and Wholeness”

Rev. Joel Strom

Today’s scripture is only 45 verses into Mark’s gospel and we have our third healing story. Mark jumps out of the starting gate and hits the ground running. There’s no birth story, no shepherds, angels or Magi. Instead, there’s Jesus as an adult charging out of the wilderness saying, *“The kingdom of God is here, so change and believe the good news!”*

And he immediately starts healing people. He heals a man that Mark says, was suffering from an “unclean spirit.” Next, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is suffering from a fever and Jesus heals her. And finally, a man suffering with leprosy comes to him begging and kneeling, and pleads to have it taken away from him, this disease that had not only strangled him physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. And Jesus responds, *“I want you to be clean and to be healed.”*

Mark wastes no time and dives right in.

Our Confirmands have their first class today right after worship and they’ll soon start meeting with their Mentors where together they explore the Gospel of Mark. I’ve found these first couple chapters of Mark’s Gospel to sometimes be a little jarring and disrupting for our teens, as they are confronted with Jesus’s miraculous healings. And questions arise...*good questions*: did this really happen? Does God offer healing like this? Did God once heal like this but doesn’t anymore? If so, why does God *not* heal like this anymore?

I’ve discovered after hearing from our Mentors they were asking the same kinds of questions, and then I said to myself, *“Who am I kidding? Those are my questions, too!”*

There is a certain mystery to God’s healing touch, isn’t there? Does, and if so, how does God heal today are fair questions with which to wrestle.

I admit to being somewhat interested and curious with faith healers on TV. I’ve sometimes gotten sucked into watching a program late at night, which then inevitably opens up all kinds of questions for me: did that really just happen or was it smoke and mirrors? Was that person just miraculously healed? They couldn’t walk but now they can? And if so why? Was it because of the faith healer or the person being healed? How and why did God use that person? Was their faith just stronger than mine, because I’ve prayed those prayers? Or do they just believe more than I do?

Which then opens up a whole set of new questions about what it means to believe and to have *enough* faith, and damage can be done to your faith when you pray and healing does not come and you are left with this belief that, well, I guess my faith just wasn't strong enough.

Before coming to TPC I was a chaplain at a hospital in New Jersey, where I explored many of these questions. As I visited with families and individuals, together we offered many prayers for healing, for God's healing touch to be upon them and whatever was ailing them at the time. And what happened was that some people were healed; they were cured and surgery was successful, and on one occasion cancer was there one day and it was gone the next. The unexplainable and miraculous happened.

But at the same time, many were not healed as they or their loved ones desired to be healed. I journeyed with patients and their families for months sometimes, and we prayed fervently for God's healing. They were often people of great faith and yet the physical healing never came, and they passed away. Some prayers were answered with a "yes" while others seemed to receive a "no." I rejoiced with a family one day and grieved with another the next day.

There is a mystery to physical healing, our prayers and God's involvement. *It is mysterious...* and I do not assume to have the answers. I have many more questions left. And I am okay with that.

But while my time as a chaplain forced me to wrestle with the questions, it also opened my eyes to the many ways that God *does* heal in our lives – the many ways that God's healing touch is upon us. God heals through modern medicine. God heals through the wisdom and care of doctors and nurses. And God heals through the human body itself.

This past week there was a cut and blood on a finger in my house and the question was asked, *But how will it get better?* Well, it will be itself. That's just how our bodies work. *Really?...* was the response I received, with a facial expression that included a mix of amazement and bewilderment.

But what I learned the most through my experience as a chaplain is that there is more to healing than just the physical. God desires to heal us and make us whole in more than just our physical needs. My supervisor said to me one time as we discussed a visit I had with a patient, "*Joel, that patient you visited, they were healed. Their surgery was successful, but they left the hospital not fully healed. There is still much inside of them that is waiting to be brought to the surface, to be named, and to be healed.*"

Today is a service of Healing *and* Wholeness, and wholeness is something that stretches beyond physical healing. Wholeness can come with or without physical healing. Wholeness is an inner healing, an inner peace and an inner acceptance. Wholeness is trust, when so much is out of your control. Wholeness is the discovery of meaning in the most unlikely of places. Wholeness is finding purpose. Wholeness is the healing of your spirit. Wholeness is the healing of your soul.

Sometimes God heals us physically, and we should pray for physical healing, but sometimes God does not heal us physically. But God always offers us the possibility of wholeness.

On Sunday nights in January at Youth Group our teens have been watching these videos that our High School teens watched on their mission trip to West Virginia last summer with Next Step Ministries. The videos come from Next Step's "Truth or Dare" series, which showcases a diverse array of people who encountered Jesus's love and compassion and dared to live that truth out in amazing ways.¹

Two weeks ago, we watched a video about Katherine Wolf and her husband, Jay. The video begins with Katherine being wheeled out to the center of the screen in a wheelchair and saying, *"I have a paralyzed face, I am deaf in one ear, I have terrible double vision and my eyes don't track, and I can't see well. I'm obviously in a wheelchair and I can't walk, and life in this body...is not easy per se."*

She goes on to describe how she grew up in Alabama in a Christian home and soon after attending a Christian college she and her new husband moved out to Los Angeles on this great adventure to pursue careers and start a family. Everything was going well, until one day, it was just like any other, Katherine suddenly fell to the ground and her hands and feet went numb.

Thankfully her husband was at home, he called 911 and she was taken away on a stretcher to a hospital, and for the next 16 hours she went through radical micro-brain surgery. It turned out that Katherine was born with a little defect in her brain that had ruptured and blown up, which this kind of defect can sometimes do.

Miraculously, she survived the surgery, but life would never be the same for Katherine and her husband. She describes the arduous rehab, not being able to eat solid foods for a year, and not being able to mother her baby like she wanted. She and Jay slowly take you through what it was like for them to adjust to this new life.

The video is at times is heartbreaking to watch as Katherine and Jay struggle to come to terms with the physical healing that is not going to come as they had hoped it would. She struggles with her sense of purpose and why she is still here.

But then the tone of Katherine's story changes, and she and Jay describe their journey to acceptance and discovery of a new purpose. And while there were times when she naturally questioned God, she describes how she and Jay leaned into God and welcomed God *into* their pain and *into* their suffering and did not push God away. Katherine and Jay's journey has been one where they slowly adjusted to her trauma, they learned to be resilient, and ultimately they were determined to grow. Their story is, well, it's miraculous.

At the end Katherine says, *"I am healed. And that sounds crazy, because look at me, no I'm not. Well, physically, maybe not. But, thankfully we are not just dealing with the physical situation. There is so much more at work here."*

What she and her husband have experienced is wholeness, which is bigger than healing. It's the inner peace, acceptance and purpose that God can bring. It's the healing of spirit and it's the healing of soul.

¹ <http://nextstepministries.com/films/>

And the first step on the journey to healing and wholeness is to ask, to desire it, just like the man with leprosy did with Jesus. It is to name that which you are in need of healing, whether it's physical, emotional or spiritual, because in the act of asking, in laying our concerns and needs in front of God, we open up a space for God to enter in.

Sometimes we are healed just as we hoped we would be, but sometimes we are not. But if we are not, the possibility always remains for wholeness, for the inner healing, peace and acceptance that God can bring.

Healing sometimes happens just as we want it to, but sometimes it does not. But wholeness, the healing of spirit and the healing of soul, that is always very much a possibility, and that is also very much God's healing touch in our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.