

Salvation: Therapy, Cure, and Health
Paul Leichty
Mark (3:9-10); 5:21-43; Psalm 23
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- I. Psalm 23 compares human existence to that of sheep.
 - A. It is no accident that that this psalm is often requested and used at life's most vulnerable moments.
 1. Human beings are like sheep in need of a shepherd.
 2. We need some essentials to live: food, water, rest, and care.
 3. We need comfort in the midst of evil and protection from enemies of all kinds.
 4. We need to be reminded of God's presence "in the valley of the shadow of death."
 - B. Yet, as human beings who are vulnerable to sickness and disease, many people often reach a point of desperation before asking the pastor to read Psalm 23.
 1. Stop and think for a moment: What do people do when they come to the end of the rope?
 2. Where do you go when you are ill and the doctors have tried everything and nothing seems to work?
 3. Where do you go when the medical folks say you are dying?
 4. Where do you go when you seemingly have no other options?
 - C. For many people in your area and across the U.S. today, the answer is obvious: "Mayo Clinic."
 1. Unlike many of you, I would guess, my knowledge of Mayo Clinic is second-hand.
 2. But a quick look on the Mayo website confirmed and clarified my impression: Mayo Clinic and its associated hospitals, claim to "form the largest integrated medical center in the world, providing comprehensive diagnosis and treatment in virtually all medical and surgical specialties. More than 350,000 patients from all walks of life seek answers at Mayo Clinic each year."
 3. So, where do you go when all else fails? If you live in the central U.S., the answer is Mayo Clinic.
 - D. However, if you live some place like Nepal, the answer may be different.
 1. In the April 2013 issue of *Mennonite Health Journal*, Dr. Theo Beels, a friend of mine from seminary days, shares a story from Tansen, Nepal where a non-Christian family repeatedly brought their 18-year-old daughter to a Christian hospital in which he worked.
 2. The first visit was to the emergency room in June 2012 because of rapidly progressive weakness in the young woman's legs.
 - a. She was referred to another hospital which had an intensive care unit which the doctors felt she needed.
 - b. But the family ended up not going there because it was too expensive.
 3. On the second visit a month later, she could not move her legs at all and had such bad bed sores that the little Christian hospital could not manage them.
 - a. She was referred to a hospital in the capital of Kathmandu.
 - b. When she arrived there, that hospital wouldn't admit her and referred her to another hospital.
 4. The family finally decided that they could not afford the care there either and returned to Tansen where Dr. Beels saw her in ER.

- a. At that point, she was very malnourished, had a severely collapsed lung, was unable to move her legs and in pain because of the largest, most horrible looking bedsores that the doctor had seen in his life.
 - b. So the question got transferred to the hospital itself: What do you do when you come to the end of the rope?
- II. There was no Mayo Clinic in the early first century. There was not even a Tansen Hospital.
- A. So when the word got around that Jesus was able to heal people that no one thought could be healed, people started coming from near and far.
 - B. In Mark 3:9-10, we read that *[Jesus] told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; for he had cured [therapeuô – serve, cure] many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him.*
 1. People came from miles around seeking to be healed from their illness or condition.
 2. They came out of such desperation that they threatened to crush Jesus.
 3. They came to be saved from death itself.
 - C. In the passage read for us today from Mark 5, we find two prime examples of this end-of-the-rope desperation in this story within a story.
 1. In the first story, we have a synagogue leader with a critically ill daughter.
 - a. Most synagogue leaders were not exactly on friendly terms with Jesus.
 - b. Yet, this man, Jairus, came up to Jesus, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, *"My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."* Mark 5:22-23 (NRSV)
 2. The other story is of an anonymous woman with a bleeding condition. Even though she was not supposed to be out in public with her condition, she made her way through the crowd to simply touch Jesus' clothing in her desperate attempt to be healed.
 - D. So what is it that people are seeking in this desperate quest for healing?
 1. Is it relief from pain?
 2. Is it a cure that will take away all disease permanently?
 3. Is it to simply hold off death's inevitable arrival for a few more years?
 4. Is it to live in relative peace?
 - E. I want to explore some answers this morning by looking at the meaning of the language of healing in these stories.
 1. I want to focus on four specific words in the original Greek language in which the Gospels were written.
 2. I've translated those four words into the four key words of the title of this message.
 - F. Yet, all four words have been translated in some English Bibles with some form of the word "heal."
 1. This suggests that these four words bring different nuances of meaning to our understanding of healing.
 2. Understanding those nuances as illustrated in these stories can help us toward a fuller understanding of the meaning of healing in the ministry of Jesus.
 3. And that understanding has profound implications for how we as a church continue to carry out God's ministry of healing in our world today.
 - G. I give organizational leadership to an association of Mennonite professionals in the healthcare field called **Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship**.
 1. Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship seeks to foster the integration of Christian faith from an Anabaptist perspective with life as a healthcare professional.

2. However, you don't have to be a doctor or nurse or physical therapist or lab technician, a dentist, or psychiatrist or dietician or social worker to be about Christ's healing work in the world.
3. Healing is a key word in the mission statement of Mennonite Church USA as a denomination.
4. On your own congregational website, you invite your community "to join ...in being a sign of God's healing and hope in our community and world.
5. So, as Christians, we all have a healing ministry.

H. What can we learn, then, about the healing ministry of Jesus himself?

III. First, we return to two verses in which Mark sets the context of Jesus' healing ministry.

A. When Mark 3:10 says that Jesus *had cured (healed) many*, we have the Greek word *therapeuō* from which we get our word "therapy."

B. Therapy is a key concept in healthcare today.

1. It generally refers to a process which helps someone get better.
2. Since this spring when my Mother broke her hip, she has been receiving physical **therapy** in the hope that she can walk again.
3. Cancer patients receive **chemotherapy** or radiation **therapy** to reduce tumors.
4. People troubled mentally or emotionally receive **psychotherapy** (more often simply shortened to **therapy**) to help them become more emotionally stable and happy.
5. We also use the word in our friendship relationships. After an enjoyable time of talking and laughing with a friend, we might tell him or her that was "good **therapy**."

C. However, I was interested to find out that the root concept of Greek word is "to serve."

1. To provide therapy is to serve in the process of healing.
2. To be a therapist is to give one's time, talents, energies, and skills in service for the healing of another.
3. It is to give a piece of one's own life for the life of another.

D. So when Mark says that Jesus *healed (or therapied) many*, he was writing about Jesus giving his life for the healing of others.

1. Jesus served in a therapeutic ministry so that others might be healed and live.
2. Jesus gave his life for the life of the world.
3. And, as followers of Jesus, we are also called to give our lives in healing service to a broken and hurting world.

E. So "therapy" or "service" becomes our first healing word.

IV. We find the second of these healing words in connection with what happened to the woman with the condition of bleeding.

A. When she touched the clothes of Jesus, Mark says that *she felt in her body that she was **healed** of her disease...* Other versions translate *healed of her affliction* (NASB) or even *freed from her suffering* (NIV).

1. Here the Greek work [*iaomai*] means to cure or restore, to bring freedom from the suffering of the disease or condition.
2. In English we sometimes talk about someone being restored to health.
3. So this woman was freed of her chronic disease, cured, healed, restored to health.

B. Yet this meaning of curing has more implications than just restoring to physical health.

1. Because of the OT purity laws surrounding a woman's menstruation, a condition of chronic bleeding meant that she was continually impure.
 - a. This would make anyone who was in contact with her impure.

- b. She would be unwelcome in public.
 - c. Her family would keep their distance.
 - d. She would have been essentially an outcast in her own community.
 2. So to restore her to health was not just a cure in the physical sense of stopping or “drying up” her bleeding (to use the literal translation).
 - a. By touching Jesus, she could again be “in touch” with family and friends.
 - b. She was restored to her community.
 3. By being restored to community, she would have also experienced an emotional and spiritual restoration.
 - a. She no longer needed to be troubled about why she had to suffer such a condition and be ostracized by her community.
 - b. She no longer was prevented from going to the temple to worship God.
 4. Her healing was a complete cure of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
 - C. She was indeed restored to the fullness of health.
- V. This sense of complete healing is conveyed through yet a third word in which Jesus affirms this woman’s healing.
- A. It comes at the end of 5:34. Jesus says, “...*go in peace, and be healed of your disease.*”
 1. Here, word used is Greek word [hugiês] from which we get English word “hygiene.”
 2. This is a very interesting word used in this context.
 - B. For many people today, hygiene carries the implications of cleanliness and sanitation.
 1. Yet its dictionary definition is much broader.
 - a. Hygiene or hygienics is defined as “the science that deals with the promotion and preservation of health.”
 - b. And the second definition is “Conditions and practices that serve to promote or preserve health.”
 2. Certainly sanitation and cleanliness play a big part of hygiene, promoting and preserving health.
 - a. That’s a big part of the underlying reason for purity laws in the Old Testament.
 - b. But good hygiene is more than an obsessive compulsive desire to be clean.
 3. Hygiene also involves eating right, exercising appropriately, avoiding harmful substances, and promoting healthy relationships with others and with God.
 - C. In fact, if I stop and think about it, I realize that my hygiene and health is also bound up with your hygiene and health.
 1. If the water in our community is contaminated, none of us will have good hygiene.
 2. If the food that we buy has a residue of chemical pesticides that are not easily washed away, then anyone who eats that food has the potential to become ill.
 3. If there are no sidewalks or bike paths in our neighborhood, it will likely affect our ability to get sufficient exercise.
 4. If the air that we breathe is filled with pollutants, the health of all of us is affected.
 - D. So this particular word for healing is about the total, overall health of the whole person in the whole community.
 1. This is reinforced when Jesus says, “...*go in peace, and be healed of your disease.*”
 - a. The word for peace here is the word that is used to translate the Old Testament Hebrew word, “shalom.”
 - b. In the Bible, peace or shalom is never just about the absence of conflict.
 2. When Jews greeted each other or said good-bye to each other saying, “Shalom,” they weren’t saying, “I hope you don’t get into any conflicts with your family or friends.”

- a. They were wishing each other a total sense of well-being: good physical health, an emotional sense of well-being, healthy relationships, and, most of all, God's blessing.
 - b. Shalom in its fullness is human life in community as God originally intended it—freedom from sin, sickness, disease, conflict, and all of suffering and consequences that go with that human condition.
3. So we too participate in healing ministry as we seek the shalom and the hygiene or health of not only ourselves, but of all persons in the community.

VI. All of these meanings are gathered up in the final word that is used for healing in this passage and in the New Testament as a whole.

A. This is the word that is often translated “save” or “salvation.”

1. In Mark 5:34, before Jesus says, “...*go in peace, and be healed of your disease,*” he first says, “*Daughter, your faith has saved you.*”
 - a. Now, you won't find that translation in many of our Bibles. Rather, it says, “*Daughter, your faith has made you well*” or “...*your faith has healed you.*”
 - b. But the word is the same one used in Acts 16:31 where the apostle Paul tells the Philippian jailer, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.* (NRSV)
 - c. The different translations reflect the fact that in the English language, we have generally lost the connection between peace and wholeness, health and salvation.

B. But the healing stories in the Gospels are intended to represent Jesus as one who saves from all human conditions of sin, suffering, sickness, disease, war, and conflict—anything that destroys or disrupts the shalom in which God intended us to live.

1. Jairus pleads for his daughter, (5:23) *Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be [be saved] and live.*”
2. The woman with the bleeding condition says to herself, (5:28) “*If I but touch his clothes, I will be [saved].*”

C. And then, of course, in v. 34, Jesus says, “*Daughter, your faith has saved you.*”

1. It is that same faith that Jesus calls forth from *the leader of the synagogue* [Jairus], when he says, “*Do not fear, only believe.*”
2. It is a faith that seems laughably ridiculous to the worldly mourners gathered around the lifeless daughter of Jairus.

D. But Jesus' pronouncement that “...*the child is not dead but sleeping*” is but an invitation to all of us to get a foretaste, a glimpse into the power of the resurrection through a saving, healing ministry and movement of God that breaks into our present situation.

VII. My friend, Dr. Theo Beels, got a glimpse of that reality as he and the hospital medical and pastoral staff ministered to an 18-year-old girl in a small hospital in Nepal.

A. He wrote, “We discussed her situation with the family and gave them the option of taking her home. This is a common practice in Nepal as it is much cheaper to transport a live human being than a dead body. The family chose to leave her with us as, understandably, they felt that they could not care for her at home.”

1. He goes on: “She died the next day.
2. “During the several weeks that she stayed with us she was followed by our pastoral care team who supported her and prayed with her. During this time she confessed Jesus as her Lord and Savior and the head of our pastoral care department conducted a Christian funeral for her with full cooperation of her parents.”

- B. So here, we get a glimpse of the meaning of “healing” for our own lives and for our ministry as disciples of Jesus.
 - 1. In the final analysis, all of the healing stories point us to the power of God to bring about a final and complete healing and wholeness in the end.
 - 2. It is this full and final and all-encompassing healing that we accept by faith.
 - 3. The story from Nepal is but one contemporary glimpse into that same power of God’s resurrection life in Jesus.
- C. We have seen the multi-faceted meaning of healing in the Gospel stories, the stories of Jesus at work in both the first century and the twenty-first.
 - 1. **Healing is therapy and service:** Jesus’ presence among the crowds of this world to give his life to bring healing and hope to others.
 - 2. **Healing is cure and restoration** as people are restored to health of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
 - 3. **Healing is hygiene and wholeness**, a public health that seeks the shalom of each individual and the whole community.
- D. And finally, **healing is salvation.**
 - 1. In the final analysis, we too are called, in the midst of our desperate situations at the end of the rope, to heed Jesus’ word to Jairus: *“Do not fear, only believe.”*
 - 2. God’s resurrection power demonstrated in Jesus, will heal—will save.