

Healing – what does it mean to be healthy?

What is healing?

How would you define healthy?

Jesus' healing miracles point us to the fact that the body and the soul depend on each other — that our lives have a physical reality as well as a spiritual one - if we focus on one and ignore the other, then our lives go out of balance. If we consistently live our lives out of balance, then parts of them will spiral out of control. True wholeness comes from accepting and celebrating the gifts of spiritual and physical health that are given to us in Jesus Christ.

In thinking about what healing is I can't help thinking that everyone Jesus healed did also one day finally die. Jairus' daughter / the woman haemorrhaging both healed by Jesus – did in the end, like all of us, eventually die. So, I don't think it is enough to read the miracles of Jesus as simple miracle stories granting cures to earthly diseases as that has limited effect – what more is there to healing? Let us look at a brilliant story of healing in the gospel of Mark to help us think more about what healing and being healthy is all about...

Mark 5:21-43

²¹When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²²Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³and 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."

²⁴So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." ²⁹Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³²He looked all around to see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

³⁵While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" ³⁶But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Questions...

1. What do you think about the story of Jairus being interrupted by the bleeding woman? What significance can you glean from this?

2. How do you think Jairus and the bleeding woman's characters contrast?

Status, name and no name, uncleanness, begging – Jairus contrasted to the woman who touches Jesus...

3. How do Jairus and the bleeding woman approach Jesus – how is this different? Is there a difference in the way touch is used in the two stories

The woman touches Jesus – Jesus touches the daughter – who heals who? Is healing enacted by us / another?

4. What is different about the witnessing of the two healing miracles – who was there?

Woman – a crowd ; daughter – everyone is sent out

5. Can you see any connections between the daughter and the bleeding woman?

12 years alive and 12 years of bleeding

6. What do you think of the assertion that all who Jesus healed would one day also die? Does that cause you to think about this story differently? Why or why not?

In Jairus' the story of a man who would go to any length to get help for his daughter. His love compels him even to beg - a posture no man in his time and place would consider if he felt he had any other choice. More than that, we hear that Jairus was a leader of the synagogue. What must it have taken for him to approach Jesus? What other avenues must he have attempted first before he turned to Jesus. Indeed, perhaps this story is told to remind us that Jesus receives our deepest hurts and fears and even if he is our 'last resort' still he simply 'goes with us' as he did with Jairus.

The bleeding woman would have been considered 'unclean' and therefore prohibited from entering the 'holy places' of her time. We can only begin to imagine how she was treated by her family, her community. - her illness had broken more than her body. And yet we hear that even in her desperation, she does not have the courage to go to Jesus to ask for what she needs. Rather, she believes if she can just get close enough perhaps some of the goodness Jesus offers will also be hers. Jesus turns to her and acknowledges the connection they now share. It ends with Jesus' promise that her healing was not only physical - but would now extend to all of her life. And somehow that larger promise is only spoken and received in the relationship formed between them.

7. Is there a difference between being cured and healed? Can we be one and not the other?

8. What makes a healthy world? Healthy community? Healthy church? Healthy people?

9. What healing do we therefore need in our world? Our community? Our church? Ourselves?