



SAINT JAMES'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Fremont, California

SERMON

28. June, 2009. Pentecost 4

Title: "Your Faith Has Made You Well"

Text: Mark 5:21-43

J.J.



Today's Gospel tells us stories about "healings." These are not the first healings in Jesus' ministry, but they were and are very important stories, appearing in all three of the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. I find the story about the healing of the woman who had suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years to be particularly insightful. She's a woman of great courage, persistence, and faith (as Jesus points out).

The focus, this Sunday, is clearly on healing—Jesus the healer—raising the daughter of Jairus and the healing of the woman.. It is for that reason, Kathy and I have invited the members of our Healing Ministry Team here at St. James', Brian, Barbara, Debbie and Pamela, to join us today in a sort of "round table" discussion (minus the table) about this Gospel reading and its implication for our ministry of healing here at St. James'.

First of all:

- Let's talk a little about the Gospel reading: What impresses me about these stories is the courage and persistence of the people being healed or the members of their family.
 1. What stands out for you?
 2. What do you think went through the thoughts of Jairus or the woman, before the healing?
 3. What about afterward? Your "faith" has made you well.
 4. What about how Jesus responds? He is the compassionate one in the face of human suffering, who makes the needs of those suffering the norm for his action of healing, disregarding all of the social taboos and conventions (talking to a woman in public and violating the stringent taboo against touching a corpse. What does that say to us?
- We should also talk about healing . . . because the whole idea of "healing" can get a little complicated for us modern folks. It raises a number of questions, for example:
 1. Is there a difference between healing and curing?
 2. What is a healing ministry all about? How do you understand that ministry?
 3. Can anybody be a "healer" or do you need to be trained?
- Some might like to know . . . when someone comes up for healing, what actually happens?
 1. What and where are the healing prayers? (BCP p. 453ff "Ministration to the Sick")
 2. What's happening when a person goes over to the prayer station and kneels down in front of another person who lays their hands on them and prays?
 3. What is this "anointing" all about (See James 5:13-16)?
- Again, the challenge for us "modern folks" is that we are somewhat suspicious about "healings." We've seen a lot of so-called "healings" on religious TV programs (e.g. Oral Roberts), and that can confuse some of us. It does me. What about that?
 1. Well, what if I don't get the healing I ask for? Does that mean there's something wrong with me? Like I didn't have enough "faith"?
 2. What does it mean if some people are healed right away, while others have to keep coming back?
 3. Or, what does it mean if it looks as if someone is healed, but the problem returns?

Well, we are way over time, and we didn't get to half of the questions. We may have to make this one of our monthly topics at our Faith Formation hour. I want to thank Brian, Barbara, Debbie and Pam for being with us this morning and sharing their insights into this important ministry.

Many of you, but perhaps not all, are aware that the healing rite—the laying on of hands—is offered almost every Sunday. The laying on of hands for healing has been a significant part of the ministry of the church since its earliest days. Healing was an integral part of Jesus' ministry. Healing is one of the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:4-11). After the Holy Spirit had come to the Apostles and other disciples, at Pentecost, Peter and John, and others, were able to heal in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:1-26).

Here at St. James', we offer the laying on of hands for healing and anointing during the Eucharist at most services, including now our 8am service. And I should add, we are always looking for more of us to be trained and to participate in this important ministry. This ministry is communal, and therefore it's offered during the time of the Eucharist and is open to all who desire healing of body and/or spirit, for themselves or others. It also asks of us, we who come forward to receive the laying on of hands and anointing, it asks us to come as the woman in today's Gospel: . . . full of faith . . . open to God in prayer . . . open to receive God's gift of healing. As we pray in the Book of Common Prayer (Ministration to the Sick, BCP, pp. 453-461), as we lay on hands and anoint with oil, we beseech "our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain you with his presence, to drive away all sickness of body and spirit, and to give you that victory of life and peace which will enable you to serve him both now and evermore. Amen.

S.D.G.

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