

"THE HEALING POWER OF JESUS"

INTRODUCTION We turn to the New Testament, to an incident that will lead us into the theme of today's sermon. The incident has to do with a woman who was sick for twelve years and then one day was healed by Jesus.

DEVELOPMENT Actually, we know very little about this woman. We do not know where she lived; we do not know her name; we do not know whether she had a family or not.

We do not even know exactly what was wrong with her. About all that we know is that she had some kind of disability and that for twelve years she went from one doctor to another. And instead of getting better, she got worse.

One day she heard some reports about a young man living in Nazareth whose name was Jesus - stories about people who had been sick for years and who were being made well by Him. Her interest naturally was aroused. She thought this might be her last chance, and as long as there was one chance left, she was bound and determined to make the most of it.

The more she heard about Him, the more confidence she had in Him, and finally one day she succeeded in finding Him. He was on His way to the house of Jairus, but she was bold enough - as people are likely to be bold who have been sick for a long time and who see before them an opportunity to be made well, to push her way through the crowd and touch His clothes. She was cured at once, and when Jesus turned around and looked at her, He said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace".

REFLECTION We're interested in that woman because we're interested in health, particularly in our own health. We want to be well; we are not well all the time. Some of us have stronger constitutions than others, but I can imagine that it's safe to say that no one in this congregation today can claim that he has never had a sick day in his life.

We are interested in being well, and naturally when we come across any evidence that points to a source of health that we may not have known before, we want to know more about it. Therefore, we turn to this story as a sample of a number of similar episodes that we find in the Gospels with questions in mind about the power of faith in God to heal, to make us well.

CURED AN ILLNESS The first thing that strikes us about this story is the fact that Jesus cured an illness which the doctors had not been able to cure. People, I suppose, will draw different conclusions from this fact. Some will simply refuse to believe it. They will put it down to the tendency of men and women who idolize a hero to exaggerate the stories that are told about him, and they will say that this is one more of the legends about Jesus...that it's not an accurate record of fact...that the incident has been built up, stepped up, enlarged in order to make Jesus a hero.

Personally, I do believe it - the healing power of Jesus. The one thing about Jesus about which there is no possible doubt, unless one doubts the authenticity of the entire record, is the fact that He made sick people well. He was one of those people who had an extraordinary power over the lives of others - yes, over their bodies as well as their minds. We realize that He is not the only person in history who has had this unique power. To be sure, He had it to a supreme degree, but it was not something entirely new with Jesus. Elisha in Old Testament times had it; Peter, James and John had this same gift to heal in

the early days of the Christian Church. We hear of people in our own time who apparently have this similar gift. There are too many examples of this extraordinary power to heal physical disease to simply dismiss them as exaggerated fact and legend.

But then others - having heard this story - may be tempted to go to the other extreme and renounce all doctors. Perhaps they will say something like this,

"Well....if this is so....if Jesus healed entirely by faith something that the doctors were not able to heal, then let's get rid of the doctors...admit their ~~impotency~~...not put any trust in them at all". powerlessness, inability

Personally, I would not want to see that happen. I know too many people who owe a great deal to what some doctor has done for them to suggest such a thing.

GOD DEALS DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY

The point I'm leading up to is this (and ~~am~~ not sure whether this is the best way to put it) - God deals with us directly and sometimes indirectly.

Let me try to illustrate what I mean. Take, for instance, the beautiful and fertile Connecticut River valley. God waters it and He waters it - you might say - directly. Nobody does a great deal about it. The people of the neighborhood plow the land, plant the seed, and God waters it for them abundantly.

There are other river valleys - just as fertile, just as beautiful, larger, vaster - and some of these other river valleys are to be found in the Western part of our country. Here I'm thinking of the ones way out West - in Arizona, California, Utah, Nevada. In some of these cases, you might say that God does not water the valley directly. As a matter of fact, in certain instances, He left it a desert - as dry as a bone, and just as barren, but He sent men into it who have dug channels through which the water flows thus irrigating the land. These valleys are great garden spots of the West.

The point is this: God waters all of these river valleys. The ones in the East, for the most part, He waters directly; and some of the ones in the West, He waters indirectly through the agency of men and their ingenuity, through the machines. It would be inaccurate for us to say that the source of fertility is different in the second case than it is in the first. The fertility of both comes from God, but in one case directly, and in the other indirectly.

Do you see what I'm leading up to. Sometimes healing power comes to us when we need it most directly from God - as a response to our prayers, in response to our faith. Sometimes it comes indirectly through the channels that men have made by the study of human anatomy and medicine and surgery. And when we are sick, there are two things we can do. FIRST: we may reach the source of healing power directly by prayer or through a person who has this extraordinary gift of healing power. SECOND: we may reach it indirectly through the channels that medical science and medicine has made known to us.

WHY USE ONE WHEN YOU MIGHT USE BOTH?

HER FAITH MADE HER WELL

her well.

Going back to the story once again, the second thing we note is that it was the woman's faith that made

Jesus always insisted that the cure was due to the faith of the person and not to any unusual power in Himself. I'm sure that He was conscious of His own power, but He never talked about it or made any claims for it. The people who were healed did this.

This woman apparently had a great deal of confidence in Jesus; there wasn't the slightest bit of doubt in her mind that if she could only get to Him, touch His garments, He would heal her. And He did. We might accuse her of having "blind" faith. Some might even go on to suggest that she was superstitious, for she thought if only she could touch His clothes, it would happen and she'd be healed. Whatever sort of faith she possessed, whatever it was founded upon, it was her faith that made her well and Jesus turned to her and said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace".

The point is this: nobody is ever cured of anything without faith.

There is no medical cure without some measure of faith. The patient on the one hand must have faith in the doctor and in the drugs that he uses. He has to have faith on a higher level in the forces of nature that heal the body, and ultimately he has to have faith in God as the source of all health and life.

And the doctor, he, too, has to have faith - faith in himself, in his instruments, faith in the powers which he dispenses, and in my mind it's quite ridiculous to talk about any cure and leave out the element of faith. The person on the hospital bed who has no will to live, nothing to believe in, presents quite a problem to the doctor who is trying to cure him. It's only when a person layshold on life and is determined to get well and wants to get well because he or she wants to live to the glory of God and for the fulfillment of his own life, that medicine or anything else has any possibility to cure him.

And, of course, the great doctor is not only the doctor who has acquired all of the necessary skills, but the doctor who can inspire that confidence in a patient. And the doctor who possesses this gift can almost bring the dead back to new life!

"Her faith made her well" said Jesus. There is no healing without faith, and it is up to us as we approach a situation in which we are searching for help, to lift our faith up above the ordinary channels of healing to the divine source from whence comes the ultimate powers of life.

Our faith is neither in pills nor in prayer. It is in God who uses both pills and prayer as channels of His healing power.

SUMMARIZE To summarize it all here at the end, I would say that the ministry of Jesus - wherever it is carried on - always ought to be a healing ministry.

You say, "here...in this church? - which is not a Christian Science Church, nor a healing tabernacle". I would say, "yes...here in this church with these things to guide us...."

All healing depends on faith.

There is only one Source of healing power and that is God. "All healing cometh from on High" is the inscription over the main door at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital here in the city.

It may come to you by way of a channel - indirectly, through the skilled and tender hands of the surgeon, or perhaps through the wonder drugs of modern medicine, or through the fantastic machines of medical technology.

In other cases, it may come directly to you from God - in response to a prayer, in response to one's faith, one's inner spiritual resources.

~~Remember:~~ all healing depends upon faith. It is not always instantaneous, but often gradual.

FINAL WORDS

Remember also Dr. Trudeau's famous words,

"To cure sometimes,
To relieve often,
To comfort, always"

I hope and pray that as we go on our way in this Church, your faith may move from the lower levels where the channels lie and the healing is indirect, to the higher levels where the Sources are to be found so that you may be given the power to get well, the power to meet the disability or infirmity, to live with it and to transcend it. "Daughter, your faith has made you well" said Jesus. "Now...go in peace".

PRAYER

Master our impatience, Lord;
Muzzle our fears and stretch our faith to match our needs.

Through the lives of others thy healing power streams. In response to our faith, our lives are blessed with health and happiness. Give to us a realistic faith in the power and goodness so that when we are called upon to walk the valley of sickness and suffering, we may do so trusting always in thy love and healing benediction which we have seen reflected in the healing miracles of thy son, Jesus.!

In his name and spirit, we pray. Amen

THE HEALING POWER OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

We turn today to the New Testament, to an incident that will help to lead us into the underlying theme of this sermon, and the particular incident I have in mind has to do with a woman who was sick for twelve years and then one day was healed by Jesus. Actually we know very little about this woman; we do not know her name; we do not know where she lived; we do not know whether she had a family or not. As a matter of fact, we do not even know exactly what was wrong with her. About all that we know is that she had some kind of physical disability and that for twelve years she went from one doctor to another, and instead of getting better, she got worse. Finally she began to hear some stories about a young man living in Nazareth whose name was Jesus, stories about people who had been sick for years and who were being made well by him. Her interest was aroused. She thought this might be her last chance, and as long as there was one chance left, she was bound and determined like most women are, to make the most of it.

The more she heard about him, the more confidence she had in him, and finally one day she succeeded in finding him. He was on his way to visit a friend, but she was bold enough, as people are likely to be bold who have been sick for a long time and who see before them an opportunity to be made well, to push her way through the crowd and touch his clothes. She was cured at once, and when Jesus turned around and looked at her, he said: "Young woman, your faith has made you well."

All of us are interested in that woman because all of us are interested in health, particularly in our own health. All of us want to be well, and all of us are not well all of the time. Some of us have stronger constitutions than others, but I dare say that there is not a person present in this congregation this morning who has never had a sick day in his life. We're interested in being well, and naturally when we come across any evidence that points to a source of health that we may not have known before, we want to know more about it. And so we turn to this story with certain questions in our minds about the power of faith in God to heal our bodies and to make us well. You'll notice, of course, from the bulletin that the title of this sermon is "The Healing Power of Jesus". Perhaps I ought to have entitled it "What Your Church Thinks About Faith Healing" for that essentially is what this sermon is about and it's in response to the requests of several people in our congregation who have brought up this subject from time to time. Perhaps I ought to say this to that this sermon will not be as entertaining as last Sunday's sermon. After all, it's difficult to be entertaining Sunday after Sunday, and my own feeling is that people do not always come to church to be entertained.

HE CURED AN ILLNESS THAT THE DOCTORS HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO CURE..

is this that Jesus was able to cure an illness which the doctors were not been able to cure. Of course, this I think, will suggest different things to different people. Some, I suppose, will refuse to believe this incident suggesting perhaps that it's just another case of exaggerating a story in order to build up, or enhance the personality of a man, in this case, the personality of Jesus. They'll point out to you that it's not necessarily an accurate record of fact, that these healing stories were added to and enlarged upon as they were circulated

Going back to the story for a moment or two, the first thing that impresses about this story

around the early Christian world, and therefore we ought not to attach to much importance to them.

Speaking personally I do not believe that. As I go back and read and re-read the Gospel accounts I become more and more convinced that the one thing we can be sure of is that Jesus made the sick people well. He was one of those people who had an extraordinary power over the lives of other people, over their bodies as well as their minds. We know this that he is not the only person in history who has had this unique power. To be sure he had it to a supreme degree, but it was not something entirely new with Jesus. We know that Elisha apparently had it back in Old Testament times; that Peter, James and John had this same gift in the early days of the Christian Church; and we hear of people in our own time who apparently have this similar gift. You see there are too many examples of this extraordinary power to heal physical disease to set them aside as exaggerated fact and legend.

But then others, having heard this story, will go to the other extreme and renounce all doctors. Perhaps they'll say something like this, "If this is so, if Jesus healed entirely by faith something that the doctors were not able to heal, then let's get rid of the doctors". "Let's admit their impotency and not put trust in them at all". Personally I would not want to see that happen. I know too many people who owe a great deal to what some doctor has done for them to suggest such a thing.

The point I'm leading up to is this, and I'm not at all sure as to whether this is the best way to put it, but it would be something like this. God deals with us directly and sometimes indirectly. Let me illustrate what I mean. Take for instance, the beautiful and fertile Connecticut River Valley. God waters it, and he waters it you might say directly. Nobody does a great deal about it; the people of the neighborhood plow the land, plant the seed and God waters it for them in abundance. Now I would go on to say this and here you'll have to follow me very carefully or else you'll miss the point I'm trying to make, there are other river valleys - just as fertile, just as beautiful, larger and vaster, and some of these other river valleys are to be found in the western part of this country. I'm thinking of some of the ones way out west - in Arizona, California, Utah, Nevada. In some of these cases, you might say that God does not water the valley directly. As a matter of fact, in certain instances, He left it a desert, as dry as a bone, and just as barren, but He sent men into it who have dug channels through which the water flows thus irrigating the land. These valleys are great garden spots of the west. My point is this: God waters all of these river valleys. The ones in the east, for the most part, he water directly; and some of the ones in the west, he waters indirectly through the agency of men and their ingenuity. It would be inaccurate for us to say that the source of fertility is different in the second case than it is in the first. The fertility of both comes from God, but in one case directly and in the other indirectly.

Perhaps you see now what I'm leading up to. Sometimes healing power comes to us when we need it most directly from God as a response to our prayer, in response to our faith. Sometimes it comes indirectly through the channels that men have made by the study of human anatomy and medicine and surgery. When we are sick, there are two things we can do. First we may reach the source of healing power directly by prayer or through a person who has an extraordinary gift of healing power, and second we may reach it indirectly through the channels that medicine have made known to us. WHY USE ONE WHEN YOU MIGHT USE BOTH?

HER FAITH MADE HER WELL

Going back to the story once again, the second thing we notice is that it was the woman's faith that made her well. Jesus always insisted that the cure was due to the faith of the person and not to any unusual power in himself. I'm sure he was conscious of his own power, but he never talked about it or made any claims for it. The people who were healed did that. This woman apparently had a great deal of confidence in Jesus; there wasn't the slightest bit of doubt in her mind that if she could get to him, he would heal her. And he did. We might accuse her of having a "blind" faith. Some of you might accuse her of being superstitious. She thought if she could touch his clothes, she would be made well. Whatever sort of faith she possessed, whatever it was founded upon, it was her faith that made her well and Jesus turned to her and said, "Young woman, your faith has made you well. Go in peace"

The point I want to stress in connection with this, quite seriously is this that nobody is ever cured of anything without faith. There is no medical cure without some faith. The patient, on the one hand, must have faith in the doctor, and in the drugs that he uses. He has to have faith on a higher level in the forces of nature that heal the body, and ultimately he has to have faith in God as the source of all health and life. And the doctor, he too has to have faith, in himself, in his instruments, faith in the powers which he dispenses, and in my mind it's quite ridiculous to talk about any cure and leave out the element of faith. The person on the hospital bed who has no will to live, nothing to believe in, presents quite a problem to the doctor who is trying to cure him. It's only when a person lays hold on life and is determined to get well and wants to get well because he wants to live to the glory of God and for the fulfillment of his own life, that medicine or anything else has any possible chance to cure him. And of course the great doctor is not only the doctor who has acquired all of the necessary skills, but the doctor who can inspire that confidence in a patient. And the doctor who possess this gift can almost bring the dead back to life!

"Her faith made her well," said Jesus. There is no healing without faith, and it is up to us as we approach a situation in which we are looking for help, to lift our faith up above the ordinary channels of healing to the divine source from whence comes the ultimate powers of life. Our faith is neither in pills nor in prayer. It is in God who uses both pills and prayer as channels of His healing power.

HOW MUCH CAN WE EXPECT OF
GOD IN THESE MATTERS OF HEALING

There is still time to consider one more question in connection with this subject, and perhaps for some of you it may be the most important question of all. HOW FAR HAS OUR FAITH A RIGHT TO GO? In other words, how much can we expect of God in these matters of healing?

Once again considering the woman whom Jesus healed, there was not the slightest bit of doubt in her mind but that Jesus would cure her if she could only get to him. And he did. At the same time, we would have to recognize that there were many other people in that area that Jesus did not cure, people who had as much faith and confidence in him as this woman who was cured. We know too that Jesus did not attempt to make all of the people well. As a matter of fact when the crowds pressed in on him wanting to be made well, he left and would go off to another place. This was not his primary purpose, he would say. He had something else to do. Something more important in his mind. What all

of this is leading up to is this that I have known too many people with superb faith who did not get well to be able to say dogmatically that if you have faith, God will heal you.

No matter how you look at it, you are left with the sober fact that not everyone is going to get well, no matter how much faith he or she may possess. Some of you may ask "Does that mean that God does not want us to get well?" Not necessarily. God gave us life and wants us to have life, and to have it abundantly, and to be well, but God wants other things for us beside health and sometimes He cannot give us both things at the same time. You might say it's something like the parent who above everything else wants his child to be happy, but at the same time he wants his child to grow up to be honest, and at times he cannot teach him to be honest without making him unhappy. God is something like that. He wants a great many things for us - individually as well as for his universe - and we would do well to include this fact within his overall purpose, that the people with the greatest faith and the greatest desire to live and be well do not sometimes get well. And so this brings us to this conclusion: that God does one of two things. Either he will give us the power to get well, or He will give us to the power to meet the disability and transcend it.

Perhaps here I am reflecting my own personal point of view more than usual, but it seems to me that the person who approaches such situations in life with this kind of faith - "I want to be well and God in his wisdom can and may give me the power to get well. I will live for that and work for that. But if God in his wisdom doesn't make me well, I know he will give me the power to handle anything that comes my way with grace and serenity and victory" - the person who approaches life in this fashion, has a realistic faith and a faith that is in accord with the facts of existence.

What then has this church to say on the subject of faith healing? Very simply it is this. The ministry of Jesus, wherever it is carried on, always ought to be a healing ministry. You say "Here in this church, which is not a Christian Science Church, or a healing tabernacle". And I would say "yes...here in this church!...with these few things to guide us". All healing depends upon faith. There is only one source of healing power and that is God. It may come to you by way of a channel, indirectly, through the skilled hands of a surgeon, or through the wonder drugs of modern medical science. In other cases, it may come directly to you from God, in response to prayer, in response to faith. All healing depends upon faith. It is not always instantaneous, but often gradual. We remember Dr. Trudeau's famous words: To cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always. I hope and pray that as we go on our way in this church, your faith may move from the lower levels where the channels lie, to the higher levels where the sources are to be found so that you may be given the power to get well, or the power to meet the disability and transcend it.

LET US PRAY: God, Our Father, we thank thee for our bodies, and for the power that thou hast given us to keep and to make them well. Give to us a realistic faith in thy power and goodness so that when we are called upon to travel the valley of suffering and sickness, we may do so trusting in thy love and concern which we see reflected in the great deeds of thy Son. Amen

"THE CHURCH AND HEALING"

INTRODUCTION

The sermon last Sunday was about the Church and public affairs. The sermon today is about the Church and healing. The sermon next Sunday will be about the Church and a 20th century reformation.

We turn today to the New Testament, to an incident that will lead us into the theme of this sermon. The incident that I refer to has to do with a woman who was sick for twelve years and then one day was healed by Jesus.

DEVELOPMENT

Actually, we know very little about this woman; we do not know where she lived; we do not know her name; we do not know whether she had a family or not. As a matter of fact, we do not even know exactly what was wrong with her. About all that we know is that she had some kind of physical disability and that for twelve years she went from one doctor to another. Instead of getting better, she got worse. One day she heard some stories about a young man living in Nazareth whose name was Jesus, stories about people who had been sick for years and who were being made well by him. Her interest was aroused. She thought this might be her last chance, and as long as there was one chance left, she was bound and determined like most women are, to make the most of it.

The more she heard about him, the more confidence she had in him, and finally one day she succeeded in finding him. He was on his way to the house of Jairus but she was bold enough, as people are likely to be bold who have been sick for a long time and who see before them an opportunity to be made well, to push her way through the crowd and touch his clothes. She was cured at once, and when Jesus turned around and looked at her, he said, "Young woman, your faith has made you well".

We are all interested in that woman because we are all interested in health, particularly in our own health. We all want to be well; we are not all well all the time. Some of us have stronger constitutions than others, but I can imagine it is safe to say that no one in this congregation can claim that he has never had a sick day in his life. We are interested in being well, and naturally when we come across any evidence that points to a source of health that we may not have known before, we want to know more about it. So we turn to this story as a sample of a great many similar incidents that we find in the Gospels with many questions in our minds about the power of faith in God to make us well.

HE CURED AN ILLNESS

The first thing that strikes us about this particular story is the fact that Jesus cured an illness which the doctors had not been able to cure. Different people will draw different conclusions from that fact. Some will refuse to believe it; they will put it down to the inevitable habit of men and women who idolize a hero to exaggerate the stories that are told about him, and they will say that this is simply one of the legends about Jesus and that it is not an accurate record of fact and that the whole incident has been stepped up to make Jesus a hero.

Personally, I do believe it. The one thing about Jesus about which there is no possible doubt, unless we doubt the authenticity of the whole record, is the fact that he made sick people well. He was

one of those people who had an extraordinary power over the lives of other people, over their bodies as well as their minds. We know that he is not the only person in history who has had this unique power....this power to heal physical diseases. He had it, to be sure, to a supreme degree, but it was not something unheard of when Jesus appeared. Elisha had it way back there in the Old Testament. Peter, James and John had this same gift in the early days of the Church. We hear of people in our own time who apparently possess this similar gift. You see there are too many examples of this extraordinary power to heal physical disease to set them aside as exaggerated fact and legend.