

## What if the Healing Doesn't Come?

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ...

In our reading this morning from Mark's Gospel it tells us that one day - while Jesus was inside the synagogue of Capernaum teaching - a deranged man with an unclean spirit entered the building (and started to make a scene)... today we might conclude that such a man is on drugs or suffering from a mental illness (but in Jesus' day it was believed that the man had a demon)... in other words, the man was suffering from a spiritual illness (like some suffer even today)...

And to keep a long story short, it tells us in verse 25, "*But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be Silent, and come out of him!'*"... and then it says that the demon came out of the man (and all who witnessed it were amazed")...

It's an interesting story, isn't it?... it's a story about a man being healed... a story about a man receiving his life back... it's a story about sickness being taken away - a future restored - and it's what some people might call - one of the miracle stories of Jesus... and it's one of the reasons why Jesus is often referred to as the 'Great Physician'... Not only can he teach and preach the Word of God with authority (but he can also heal) which is what this story is meant to reveal...

You know, I can remember visiting a Pentecostal church (back when I lived in Chicago) and while I was there I heard this Gospel story being read at one of their healing services... and on that night (I don't remember too much of what the pastor said in his sermon) but what I do remember were the numerous people who got up that evening to give their 'testimonials'...

One man shared how he had a tumor on his brain (and the Lord took it away)... another man talked about his son's epilepsy (and how through persevering in prayer) the boy was restored to a right mind (and was healed)... and still others talked about their own cancer being healed, or their sight returning, or their arthritis leaving them... (and the whole time the congregation kept responding \_ praise God!... Amen brother!... Amen sister!)...

And I will admit - I didn't have any reason to doubt the people who shared their story that evening... in fact, I've always said, "*you can't argue with someone else's testimony!*"... and if that was their experience - God bless them - and who am I to argue with them?...

But can I tell you something?... a question kept popping up in my head – that continues to pop up (especially today – with more than 400,000 of our own citizens now dead – and that includes a few of our own)...

And the question I have wrestled with (through the years) is this, “**But what if the healing doesn’t come?**”... what if we pray for someone we love, or we pray for ourselves, or we pray for a stranger – and still the person dies?... or remains sick?... or blind?... or deaf?... then what?... (what if the healing never comes?)...

I’ve told you this story before, but I can remember being awakened at 3 O’ clock in the morning (back when I was in college) and who greets me at the door (?) but the campus police... and to keep a long story short, it had to do with my father being involved in a very serious car accident...

And can I tell you something?... I don’t think I ever prayed for someone (even to this day) with the same degree of surrender, or hope, or faith, or even perseverance) than I did that night... I mean, to see my father laying in that hospital bed unconscious (and to even imagine life without him) shook me in the deepest places of my soul... and like, we’ve all done at one point or another, I not only pleaded with God to save him – but I also made promises of what I would do if my father had lived...

And do you know what?... the healing never came – the prayer (as I prayed it) was never answered... and although I mustered up every ounce of faith that I had in my heart – my father still died...

And maybe that’s why I’ve struggled with stories (like the one we just read in Mark’s Gospel)... it’s made me wonder, “was there something wrong with my prayer – that prevented my dad from recovering?... did I do something wrong?... was God angry at me for some reason?...”

And do you know what’s even funnier? – up until that point (if I had heard that someone else had been healed of some terrible disease – or had been brought back to life after a similar tragedy) I would have rejoiced... I would have been happy...

But for a long time after my father died I wasn’t happy (and I didn’t want to hear about other people being healed, or saved, or touched by God) because as far as I was concerned – God didn’t answer prayer (and what was even worse) was that He didn’t care (at least not about me)... and perhaps - had I been at that Pentecostal church at the time in my life (that would have been my testimony) – that

sometimes the healing doesn't come (because God doesn't care) at least not about me...

But time has a way of changing us as well – doesn't it?... and I'm not going to get into every little detail of my own life (to tell you how I've matured spiritually – or how my faith has deepened and changed through the years) but what I will tell you is something I've had to learn along the way – and the truth is (whether we like it or not) that sometimes when we pray (or we plead – or even if we persevere) hoping that a healing may come – even then - sometimes the answer is still, 'No!'...

And it has nothing to do with how much God loves us – or whether or not we've lived up to some standard – I mean, just think of the man who is healed in our story (where was his faith and he certainly didn't earn the healing through his good works)... but it has everything to do with the Lord being the author of all life – and being sovereign – and simply being God...

And listen, I know that some things in life don't make any sense – (which is why I'm not trying to give you easy answers – especially to everyone who has lost someone very precious most recently) - but I've also discovered that there's nothing wrong (but something very peaceful) in surrendering to the belief (that God knows better than we do)...

We're not God – and we don't know everything... And I can only speak for myself – but in surrendering (and opening yourself up to the belief that God can still turn something bad into something good) – I've also discovered that God's Light can enter us (especially through our wounds)... a light that helps us to see that (as wonderful as life is – and as precious as it is) Eternal Life with our Lord and Savior concerns God more...

And by the way, that world is described in the Book of Revelation as a world without suffering (no crying, no mourning, no pain) – where even death no longer exists)... *and I like to say at funerals ~ "that when you get there,*

Which is why I found it very interesting a while back in reading an essay of sorts on the topic of death and the Afterlife... and it was written from a Jewish Christian perspective (and it was trying to say that there's more to our existence than what our eyes would have us see in this world)... that even now we are not completely evolved, or completed, or perfected...

*you won't want to leave. (especially if your loved ones are already there)*

and the author used a very interesting illustration to make his point... he said that life is like standing in a beautiful lobby (where the decorations are very beautiful, the temperature's just right, the lighting complimentary to our reflection) and it wouldn't be surprising (in a setting like that) if some people believed that they had already arrived (and who could blame them if they wanted to stay right there in the lobby)...

But then the author went on to say that the whole point of being in the lobby (and the whole point of life) is that all of it eventually leads us into the banquet hall (or the world to come – into the Afterlife) – where the true celebration begins... and yes, all of us wants to hold onto the things of this world (and yes, life is difficult – especially right now in this pandemic) and at times it hurts us and confuses us and perhaps even makes us sad)...

But we're also a people of faith – and God sets forth a vision (of what is waiting for us on the other side of this life) in the book of Revelation (chapter 21 verse 3) where it says, *"They will be his people, and God himself will be with them... 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes... Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will no longer exist, for the first things have passed away."*

Then goes on to say, *"Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."*...

It's one of the promises of God to see us through... *and death is not the end-*

And Friends, I'm not here to minimize your pain (because we're all in the same boat together) – but as you find yourself hurt (not by God – but by life) allow God's Light to keep pouring into you... and not all of us will find a cure for their cancer, or a cure for all of the ailments that bring us pain (and no one has ever lived a life without some tears along the way) - but to have the love of Jesus (and to trust that God knows what He's doing) is to already be healed (and made whole) for the next step of our journey... the journey that leads to Home (and into our Lord's embrace)...

*but a new beginning (a world w/out suffering)*

As we continue to journey through these dark days together (invite the Great Physician into your life - and along for the journey– so that He can show you the things - that He can do)

May the blessings of the Lord come to you in greater wisdom and in greater peace...

5

May the presence of God's beautiful Spirit give you the confidence to know that you are not alone...

And May the hope all of God's faithful be to celebrate our homecoming in the banquet hall of Heaven...

In Jesus' name we pray...

**Amen!...**