

As a lot of you know, I used to be a registered nurse—my first career, you might say. Because of this, I am very interested in the subject of healing. And what do you know, today’s Bible passage, from the book of Mark is about healing. For that matter, the Psalm which we read together touched on the subject of healing, also.

We live in a time where healing is constantly happening. We have wonderful procedures, and surgeries, and treatments, and medicines that work very well, a lot of the time.

However, we still do have illnesses, even fevers, as mentioned in the part about Peter’s mother-in-law. Apparently this was a very common and serious ailment. Folks then didn’t have aspirin or fever-reducing pills in medicine cabinets, as most of us do.

That was not a problem in this case. Jesus simply took the lady by the hand and she was well. No fever, no lingering fatigue or anything. She didn’t even have to wait for medicine to take effect, which of course is what we do.

She was well. She was so well, and so grateful, that she was up “fixing dinner” for Jesus and Simon and Andrew and James and John. And I’ll bet that dinner was great, too! I cooked one of the best dinners ever, the week I found out that my heartburn was only heartburn, not anything serious.

This was a healing miracle. Jesus had used his special, divine power to heal someone. And just before this had happened, in the verses which came before, Jesus had healed someone in the synagogue.

One thing we might want to notice about the disciples is that they were learning to take all their troubles to Jesus. (I owe this idea to Mr. William Barclay.) Everyone who encountered Jesus was learning that—here was a man who could really do things!

I’m hoping that that is the way that all of us here, and all Christians everywhere, are going about our lives—we take all our troubles to Jesus.

Just the other day I read something about that. The article suggested that when something is too big for us to handle on our own, we should take it to the Lord in prayer (like the song says) and let Jesus fight those battles for us! That’s great, isn’t it? We get so worn out fighting those battles.

Well, in this story, more and more and more people were flocking to Jesus, turning to him with their problems of illness and even demon possession. And Jesus helped every one of them.

Even when Jesus went off to pray and commune with God, on his own, they tracked him down, and he got going again, into even further territory.

Those people back then were so blessed, to have these wonderful, personal encounters with Jesus, and to witness the miraculous healing he did.

Maybe we should think about miracles a bit more. A miracle is not magic, with a wand and flourishes and incantations and spells. A miracle, a healing miracle, is a natural process which is much faster than usual.

So, the way I would say it, is that all healing is a gift from God, no matter how long it takes. When we give medicine to a baby or child, and the fever breaks, we are very happy with that, even if it wasn't instantaneous. Maybe we could say that healing is a miracle which God built into Creation.

I love the signs of healing. Like energy in a kid who has laid on the sofa for 3 days. Like the grumpiness and desire to get back to work in a person who has been seriously ill. Those things are great! If you can complain about the dullness of recovery, you are recovering!

“Throwing out the demons” is part of what Jesus did, and this sermon would not be complete if I did not go there, too.

In this day and age, we don't think of demons all that much. We don't especially like to think of them. I may be the only person my age who never saw the movie, *The Exorcist*.”

But if we think of demons in another way, say as evidence of evil, evil that is ruining people's lives, then we know that demons still exist.

Perhaps in this time, we would call these things . . . addictions, to drugs or alcohol or gambling. Perhaps we would call them abuse—to children, or cruelty.

And what better person to take these evils to than Jesus, our Lord and Savior, who has great powers, both of healing and throwing out the demons.

That is not to say that we should expect instant results, or ignore the good treatments there are, which God in great mercy and love and wisdom has provided in our modern world.

We need to pray and we need to act.

We need to recognize and think about healing in some other ways, too. As mentioned before, healing is something God has built into all creation, in animals, in human beings. In the Bible verses in Mark, there was physical healing—of

fevers and illness, and there was the kind of healing which was called “throwing out demons.”

There is also another kind of healing, and that is what I was trying to show to the children. I don't know if it will stick; Allyn told me it was weird to use real band-aids and a fake heart. Anyway the Bible verse 3, of Psalm 147 is this:

“God heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.”

Anyone here ever had a broken heart? Be honest now. Nod your heads, or raise your hands. So have I. We all have. In fact there is a book in our church library with the great title “A Heartbreak in Every Pew.” And if there is anyone here so young or so blessed never to have had his or her heart broken, just wait. Life always includes heartbreak. That is just how it is.

So many things can break our hearts—relationships, deaths or illnesses of our loved ones, our own illness, deep disappointments, betrayals, sudden financial crisis of job loss or loss of home. These things, and many more things, absolutely break our hearts.

But thanks be to God that God heals the brokenhearted. God made our hearts, and knows how to put them back together, after they've been hurt and torn up and broken.

Haven't we all experienced that, too? Haven't all of us, or at least most of us, experienced God's healing of our heartbreaks? Yes, we have.

And God does this in a lot of ways. One way is time. They say time heals all wounds, and who made time in the first place? God.

Beauty can be healing. God send us the beauty of stars and skies, and flowers and springtime, and even this odd spring-winter-spring-winter we have been having the last few days.

God sends us laughter—that is very healing. A friend of mine got a TV just so she could watch MASH, the only show she ever watched, just so she could laugh and get through a really hard time in her life.

And God send us people to help us through our heartbreaks. Just as God provides us doctors and nurses to help with the physical healing process, God provides us family or friends or even kind strangers to help us. Best of all, God provides us fellow Christians to love us and pray for us and offer support and help.

I know that is true. Not only have I experienced it in my own life, I have seen it here, in this very church. I've seen people pray for one another. I've seen

friendships that heal broken hearts. I've seen acts of kindness and helpfulness that have made all the difference!

How wonderful that there is healing, how wonderful that God created the process of healing!

Sometimes the healing is super-fast and miraculous—sometimes it is slow and steady. It can be a physical matter or a matter of good overcoming evil, or a matter of God mending our broken hearts and putting on the bandages.

All of these are blessings from God, and all of these ways of healing take a back seat to the ultimate healing of our souls. That healing is called Christian salvation, with forgiveness and eternal life in heaven. Jesus brought that healing to us through his life and death and Resurrection. All we have to do is accept it, this wonderful healing from Jesus, the great, great Healer.

Amen.

(By Rev. Sally J. DeMasters)