

Sunday, September 18, 2016

Jeremiah 8:18 to 9:1

Luke 16:1-13

Longing to be Healed

A minister was sharing with children during the service one Sunday morning. He asked the children, “What is gray, has a bushy tail and gathers nuts in the fall?” The children being a little shy were not really sure what to say to the minister. All except one little boy who asked, “Is Jesus squirrely?” The minister asked why would you ask that? The little boy answered, “Most of the time you talk about Jesus, but something that is gray, has a bushy tail and gathers nuts in the fall-- this just sounds like a squirrel to me!! What makes Jesus squirrely? The minister didn’t know how to answer the boy’s question but everyone just laughed—Jesus is squirrely. Yet the point was made—because everyone laughed and did hear the story, The minister then told how Jesus was kept very busy as he tended the needs of many who came to listen to his messages, and how he taught them to live in love and about those who just wanted to touch him to be physically healed. And Jesus did heal many—with dirt, and saliva, with energy escaping through his cloak and through the words ‘be healed’ as well as with him saying, “Go, your faith has healed you.” How they longed to be healed!

This is not only true for the people of Jesus’ time, but many years before as we read from the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah asked God to heal the people of Israel as they were facing many struggles and so he pleaded with God, “is there no balm in Gilead?” Is there no way of bringing healing to your faithful people? Then he asked, why is there no healing? Is it because the people turned away from God and towards images and foreign idols? Will God bring healing if we only ask and what kind of healing does he bring?

What is healing and what are we longing for when we seek to be healed? When little children hurt themselves what do they ask their parents do? Kiss it and make it better. And if there is blood of course polysporin and band-aids are required whether the ‘owie’ is half a centimetre or less, band aids are required. Kiss it and make it better. There’s a lot of healing in that kiss and band-aid, isn’t there?

But what about larger injuries or surgeries or even disease that is within the body? Again we seek healing, physical healing. But people are more than physical beings, we also need to be healed emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Whole person healing is what many clinics, health care professionals and even hospices are now focusing on. But what does this mean in light of what we are looking for when we pray for healing? Are we looking for something or someone to help us feel better and just what is involved? This could be a hug, words of comfort, or even knowing that God is listening to us share our problems and knowing that we are heard. God enables this healing to take place. And no matter what caused the change in our whole person, we seek to be renewed and set at peace.

Jesus was being watched by the Pharisees as he taught in the synagogue. He told many stories about what to do and how to live. The people were in search of healing—not being told how to live by the law, but how to live through love. The parable of the shrewd manager is an example of a person saving himself without any understanding of what it means to live as people of the light, that is, following God.

The rich man learns of the manager's lack of ethics and so he calls him in to clear his accounts and face his errors. Prior to seeing the rich man, the manager makes new deals with the debtors and by doing so tries to save face with them, hoping that in the near future, they will hire him as he will be fired for his underhanded deal making. Yet in the story the rich man commends the manager even though he was dishonest because he had acted shrewdly. And it is Jesus who states, that the difference is because neither the rich man nor the dishonest manager are 'people of the light.' The money is the bottom line, yet to those who have listened to Jesus there is another way to live. Jesus' point is that one needs to be trustworthy over little in order to be entrusted with more. What are we entrusted with in our lives today?

As people of Christ, we are entrusted with many things—we as the church are entrusted to carry out Christ's vision for his church and make disciples; as people of faith- we are to share our faith and live as Jesus taught—with honesty, integrity and passion. We are also entrusted to care for God's creation- yet we know that there are many problems- where do we start? We hear about global warming, melting polar caps, hurricane and tornadoes and snowstorms that are changing how we view weather and normal life. We are also entrusted to care for each other as human beings. Think about this—we are entrusted to care for each other—everyone. We are

entrusted not only to look after the little ones—but the bigger and older ones too. And how well are we doing this?

Jesus said that if we have not been trustworthy in handling what the world deems important how are we to be trusted in matters of eternity? What is required? What is necessary? Healing. Healing by God's grace.

Today we have experienced the waters of baptism placed upon Liam's head and sprinkled our way. For Liam it is a new beginning for he has become a member of God's family. God has entrusted this young boy, Liam to Stephanie and William to love and care for him, and in turn they will be loved by him. God has entrusted all of you to care for this family, to pray for them as they continue to grow in faith with God and they will pray for you in return. And because God is entrusting us with each other, we will one day experience God's eternal dwelling together. We have been entrusted with so much—but we don't have to care for everything along—we have God with us. We are not alone.

Baptism marks a beginning for Liam as he begins his Christian journey. By sharing and feeling the water we may renew faith as we live day to day for Christ. We might also look to this water splashing all about us—as the water is filled with healing. To someone present feeling the water that God made brings a renewed sense of healing. That all will be well again to the body, or to whatever the circumstances they might be feeling or experiencing.

Someone here who has watched the water being placed upon the baby's head has also felt God's Spirit upon their head and they know that all of the confusion and unsettled matters in their life will soon end and they will find peace. For someone else the waters of baptism might begin a yearning for themselves if they have not felt the waters of baptism upon them and they are seeking this. And for others, the water of baptism being shared in this church family today—brings healing, wholeness and a new trust in Christ Jesus because Christ has entrusted you to share his message of hope.

What is healing? To some people it is repairing damage done. But the damage has been done and cannot be erased. Healing is learning how to live in peace regardless of the damage done and moving on.

What is healing? Looking within oneself for a moment, getting quiet enough to hear and feel the change of the old passing away to become new again. Healing begins when we ask God to bring hope, peace, joy and love, and we experience God's Spirit moving upon us and amongst us.

Are you longing to be healed? Let go of what the world sees as valuable and turn your hearts and minds to God. Look to Christ he brings to you physical rest and healing; look to Christ as he offers you the water of life and look to Christ for he is the light of the world, sent to dispel darkness and show us how to live. Look to Jesus for he brings healing if you believe and live for him..

Let us pray:

Holy God hear us as we pray. Bring healing in body, mind, emotion and spirit. Enable us to hear Jesus' voice calling to us and enable us to rest; to receive the water of life, and to follow him as the light of the world. SILENCE> Amen.