

Sunday, October 24, 2021

Job 42: 1-6, 10-17 Psalm 34 Mark 10:46-52

### “Healing Words”

We conclude our “Words, words and actions” sermon series with today’s focus being “Healing words.”

Not quite a month ago Canada remembered the Indigenous Peoples of Canada on September 30 as this was the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Depending upon where you were in Canada gatherings varied with a focus on prayer, music, cultural awareness or even just a quiet walk in the woods. As part of the many recommendations the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation shared was that there be ways for Indigenous peoples to share their stories and prayerfully and hopefully bring about healing to what occurred to the generations lost in the Residential School system. The United Church offered an Apology to the First Nations people in 1986 and in 1994 the Healing Fund was established to support Indigenous communities. The purpose of this fund is to aid Indigenous people as they reclaim their cultures, languages, spiritual and traditional knowledge. This Fund was established because the people of the Church believed that healing was needed and an important way to reach out in Christ’s name to bring about reconciliation and hope.

But what is healing? It is a restoration from one state to another. For Indigenous people, it is in the overcoming of problems which had not been forgotten. But healing is even more than this!

There are many forms of healing and what is required for it to occur depends upon what is presented for healing. We can look from a medical or physical point of view that which is obvious is external. We see bruising, blood, broken bones, cuts and scrapes. Internally what needs to be healed is not as obvious but the individual just knows that there is a lac of not feeling ‘right’. There might not be any pain but something is just not normal. Today’s medical tests allow for many diagnoses but in some cases, there is still unknown causes for not feeling well.

Often today we hear about mental illness- partly due to the fact of covid19 and its restrictions in this last year and a half. People are thinking and often caught in mind loops of doom and gloom, leading to lack of sleep, lack of self- worth and even fear to go beyond the home. Growing and awareness of what was has been lost and the focus is on the here and now and what is wrong in the world, community and within.

Emotional healing is when a ‘new normal’ or I feel better sets up after losses of many kinds. Emotional pain is often seen with tears, anger, a sense of loss, and wonder of what is to happen next.

But there is also another kind of healing which we often do not focus upon- spiritual healing. Often one's spiritual health changes when something occurs to an individual or person close to them that leads to changes within the rest of the person. But when there is spiritual health there is a balance between the physical, psychological and social aspects of human life. This means that there is a renewed sense of life and its purpose and through this, one is healed that is, made whole.

We heard the healing story of blind Bartimaeus; a man living on the street near the city gates of Jericho. He could not see but he heard a commotion on the street and soon learned that Jesus of Nazareth was near him. A large crowd was with Jesus as he was leaving the city. Bartimaeus began to shout out loud to anyone who would listen to him. He shouted, "Jesus Son of David have mercy on me." Some of the people in the crowd told him to keep quiet. But he did not; in fact he yelled out even more loudly, he wanted to get Jesus' attention. "Son of David, have mercy on me!" He knew who Jesus was because he had heard people talking about the man from Nazareth, this Son of David who had gained a following for his teaching, and preaching and for the miracles he had performed including healing others. Finally, Jesus stopped walking and said to someone in the crowd. "Call him here." They called to Bartimaeus and said, "Get up, he is calling you- take heart!". What did the person and the crowd think was going to happen? Were they hoping that Jesus would do something amazing?

Meanwhile, Bartimaeus was sitting on the side of the road when he springs up, throws off his cloak and quickly goes to where he has heard Jesus' voice. Facing him, Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?"

What kind of question is this for Jesus to ask this man who is living on the street because he cannot see to function in the world. Was Jesus testing him about what was most important- food, shelter, money? Maybe, but when Bartimaeus answers, "My teacher, let me see again," we learn a little more about him. Bartimaeus was not always blind, and he was known as Timaeus' son who now lived in the street. We don't know for how long he had lived there, but something had occurred at some point in his life that he became blind which forced him to beg in the streets. He knew Jesus; people would have talked about what happened as Jesus taught crowds of people and in this moment, Bartimaeus acknowledges this by calling him my teacher. Bartimaeus wants to see- and so Jesus says to him. "Go your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. Jesus didn't take mud and spit to heal Bartimaeus, like he had healed another man, but it is Jesus' healing words, that brings restoration of sight - healing – health because of his faith.

Many people who have been very sick with covid19 and were hospitalized for a long time. At the time of their release, many of them advocate that it was because of their faith, and the faith of others that they were healed. For at the beginning of this pandemic, people just did not know how to bring healing, as they were only treating and reacting to what was happening.

This is often the situation for people experiencing mental illness because the mind is still not fully understood. When Job was experiencing God's testing, he suffered a great deal physically but also his words to his friends and to God were intellectual pleas asking why? He argued with God about this and yet when all was restored and Job received more than what had had before, the question of why he had suffered so much was because God was in charge. One can only imagine how much time Job spent going over and over his life, to see what caused him to lose everything. But he was a man of faith; and God knew this. His healing would begin and he would be a new person because of the experiences he had endured.

What about you? Many of us have experienced losses of different kinds not only with covid19 but even through times caused by traumatic incident with cycles of uncertainty. It is known that people who have experienced trauma and who are in need of healing, that to openly sharing with others of their experiences healing will occur. This is why more counsellors are called to do this trauma healing and as a minister, I offer this support with a biblical foundation recognizing that people like Job had a strong faith and still suffered.

We are human and for us to say we are fine means not being realistic about what is happening in our lives. We might ok to say hello to each other when we meet someone we know, but for those who know you better, being ok may not be enough. It is ok to be this way at this time- we are not sure what will happen tomorrow or into the new year. The price of gas continues to rise, food costs for vegetables and meats are rising, shipments of goods from around the world are stalled in different port cities just waiting to be taken where they need to go. But there is good news. As we shared in the reading of Psalm 34 – I sought God, who answered me, and God freed me from all my fears. This poor soul cried out and God heard- and what did God do? He saved me from all my troubles. God saved me.

Jesus asked Bartimaeus, now that you have my attention, what do you want me to do for you? "I want to see again." Jesus' healing words to Bartimaeus were "Go your faith has made you well." As people, we are not whole, well, totally great, fine or ok all the time! Something happens around the world and we worry; we see something fly through the sky and wonder about what it means. We read a newspaper and learn of murders and court cases involving people of all different ages. We hear of drug overdoses and the number of homeless people rising; Food prices go up and more people need to use a food bank. We cry out to God; and like Bartimaeus we ask for His mercy. But what do we ask?

What might we ask and do we desire to be restored in health or helped with reviewing what really is needed? What can God do for us/ you? How would you answer? And would your faith make you well? That is, will the faith you have in the one who heals be strong enough to change your perspective?

We read from the prophet Isaiah 53:4-5 "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought

us peace was on him, and by his wounds, *we are healed.*” By faith, it is through Jesus death and resurrection we are made whole, restored to health. And it is by faith that Bartimaeus was told you are well.

God’s grace is what we receive as we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. A favourite hymn, ‘Now thank we all our God’ includes these phrases, May God who “keeps us strong in grace and guides us when perplexed”; it is God who frees us from all ill—in this world and the next.” By faith in God we are healed. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray.

God we ask that you would hear our prayers in this moment—we believe, we have faith, and we offer to you now those things in our lives which need healing. Whether these matters are physical, mental, emotional or spiritual—bring healing we pray. Free us from all ills in this time and always. Amen.