

“Jesus Christ, Our Healer”

Luke 4:40-44, Isaiah 40:21-32

February 5th, 2012

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One day a four-year-old son asked his daddy about God’s name. He explained God had many names, including Father, Lord and Yahweh. After listening to his long explanation, his son asked, “Can I just call him Steve?”

Jesus Christ is the name of our Messiah, not Steve. He is the Savior and our God in our faith. The New Testament was written in Greek, and the name “Jesus” means the same in Greek as the Hebrew name “Joshua.” It means literally that God is salvation. Jesus’ ministry is to bring salvation to people, and it means “shalom.” Shalom is a wonderful greeting in our Christian community. As our Tongan people say, “Malo Lelei” for greeting each other. In Korean culture, people greet each other by saying “An Young Ha Se Yo?” It means, “Are you in peace?” In the same way, in Jewish culture, people greet one another with saying, “Shalom to you.” Shalom means “wholeness, peace and restoration.” In Jesus’ day, shalom didn’t mean only the spirituality of your soul, but it meant the ‘well-being’ of your body, soul and relationships with others in your community.

Some scholars who researched and studied Jesus’ history didn’t think of Jesus’ miracles and healings as important works as the Messiah because they looked too mystical. They tried to understand Jesus as a "Spirit person, a Jewish mystic." But Jesus’ healing ministry was one of the Messiah’s most important works. Healing the sick and casting out demons had to do with social salvation for the sick and the marginalized.

In Jesus’ day, illness was regarded as a punishment from God. If you were ill or psychologically or mentally troubled, you had to be banished from the community and could never return back as a child of God. Jesus wanted to make God’s reign present among us: No matter what sickness you had, whoever you were, you were meant to be accepted and welcomed as the children of God. In the Bible, “Miracles” are always the signs of God’s work and presence. Jesus’ ministry for healing the sick was visible sign of embracing God’s love. This reconnected us back to relationship with God. In Jesus’ day, healing the sick had more sociological meaning of ‘restoration to the community’ as well as ‘restoration to life.’

Have you ever been ill or hospitalized long term? When I used to work as a chaplain at the hospital, I heard a report that there was an average of forty times

that people come in and out of patient's room per a day. But none of them come for 'personal contact'. Those who have been seriously ill will understand the joy of simply being back in the life of their community. The Good news of the Kingdom of God has to do with restoration of those oppressed and marginalized to a full role in their communities where they can serve one another as God's family.

This morning, our Scripture reading says that "At Sunset, people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, laying his hands on each one, he healed them." I invite you to think about Jesus' hands and reflect your hands, not as a miraculous magic, but as an image of care for those with physical illness or the needy. Jesus' healing hands reached out to the people who were in need. He brought hope to the hopeless, joy to the depressed and healing to the broken hearted, laying his hands on each one.

I want to share a moving story with you: In a large inner-city church one Sunday morning, the pastor made a plea for more financial support for their program with the underprivileged of the community. After the service, a widow came to him and said that although she had been deeply moved by his sermon, there was little she could give. She worked nights scrubbing floors in an office building, and it took every cent she earned to support herself and her children. But then she added, "I understand you are going to hire another person to help in the cleaning of the church. I would like to do that job with no pay. Take the money you would have spent for such an additional worker and use it for your community program."

The pastor could not refuse her. So each morning when she finished her night work in the office building, she would come to the church, clean the rest rooms, dust the pews, and vacuum the carpets. The church was spotless and a pride and joy to the whole congregation. Years later when this devoted lady was dying, the pastor visited her. He noticed she was disturbed about something. "What's wrong, Mary?" he asked. "Well, pastor," she replied. "I'm about to meet my Lord and he has been so good to me. What can I say to him when he asks what I have done with all the loving grace he has so generously given me?" The pastor was silent for a moment and then he softly spoke. "Say nothing at all to him, Mary; just show him your hands."

Wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good. He cures the sick: He shared the good news for eternal life, established the Kingdom of God where God's compassion, healing, and serving one another in love defeated the powers of evil.

We just finished our annual rummage sale, and it was another successful

year. I want to thank Laurel Jensen again, our rummage sale coordinator, and the many volunteers who worked the sales, sharing their time and great effort. Frankly speaking, it was another cultural shock to me like the Red, White, and Blue Barbeque & Pie auction, and the Tongan Luau last year. Personally, I was moved by our rummage sale. I saw many good hands who delivered items to the church, and other hands who sorted the items out by marking the price on each item, and others who sold them. Interestingly, volunteers were happy to do this work. Our rummage sale was a great community event and a wonderful outreach program for our neighborhood. Our Methodism founder, John Wesley, emphasized three simple general rules as Christians: Do good, do no harm and stay in love with God.

Jesus Christ, our healer, laid his hands on our wounds, and he brought shalom of healing and restoration to the people. Now, he invites us to join his healing ministry to those who are weak and weary and to those who are desperately waiting for our hands in their troubled times. We should think about the role of our hands: how to reach out our neighbors and share God's love for them. God's prophet, Isaiah, reminds us of this, saying: "The Lord is the everlasting God, he will not grow tired or weary. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles." I hope and pray that we can continue to be good hands and do good for others and for our neighborhood. That why our church is here on a hill as God's people. Amen.