LENT “BECOMING A MISSION SHAPED CHURCH”
LENT 3 ‘Mission as Healing’

Sunday morning readings; Psalm 24:16, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Mark 5:1-20

The Kingdom of God and Healing

The key teaching in the New Testament is Jesus revealing the Kingdom of God. In Matthew’s gospel it’s called the Kingdom of Heaven and in John’s it’s called eternal life. Literally in the Greek ‘Life of the future age’ The Kingdom of God is Jesus central message. At the beginning of Mark (1:15) Jesus says the Kingdom of God is ‘close at hand’ or ‘near’. Jesus reveals the Kingdom of God in a unique way.

In the OT there is a lot of imagery pertaining to the Kingdom of God although it’s an uncommon phrase. It can be summed up crudely in two statements.

- The Lord is King (Psalm 24:16, 29:10, 47:2) The Lord is presently King. NOW
- The Lord will become King (Zech 14:9, Isaiah 32:1)

Although Israel knew God as King the surrounding nations did not. One day all would know. The Day of the Lord became the focus of future expectation. God would show up. There would be a new era where everything would be set right. Justice would be done. There would finally be freedom, peace, healing and restoration for God’s people.

By the time of Jesus arrival there was some expectation about what the Kingdom of God would look like. Some thought it would mean Israel conquering her enemies and crushing the Roman Empire that controlled Palestine at the time. Some had an altogether more spiritual account in mind. God’s presence in the heart of men (and women). People were generally confused when Jesus came and said the Kingdom is here. The Kingdom is me. Jesus was saying ‘I am the personification of the Kingdom. ’When you encounter me,’ Jesus was saying, ‘you encounter the future age.’ The age to come. That’s what eternal life means in Matthew. Not everlasting but life of the age to come. The future age when God reigns in fullness. Revelation 21 paints a future vision when God will live among his people, when sickness and death will be done away with. When every tear will be wiped away and shalom will truly reign. Jesus ministry was an encounter with the end. The future had broken into the present

Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom but also demonstrating its presence in healing. Healing was both the physical healing of people’s bodies but also the healing of people spiritually which might have had physical manifestations. Jesus first miracle in Mark is the casting out of a demon in Mark 1:21. Jesus reveals his power over the spirit world and over the physical world through healing. Healing is an important display of the Kingdom’s power.
In Mark only two of the healings take place in the synagogue. All the rest take place in public sphere.

**Healing as Reconciliation**
Healing in the wider context of the New Testament is Jesus healing the rift, the broken relationship between God and Humankind. 2 Corinthians 5 speaks of our role of reconciling people back to Him because of ‘God, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.’ In Cambodian language the word for reconcile is 'som roh som roul' which literally means ‘fresh and easy’ to bring peace. Our mission shaped ministry is a ministry of reconciliation. That reconciliation is multifaceted. It includes some of the areas below.

**Physical Healing**
Physical healing is an extension of God’s mission. Jesus healed people in many different settings from many different diseases and sicknesses. It displayed his power, it revealed that he was indeed the living God and it brought very real relief from suffering. Physical healing through prayer and the laying on of hands is an important part of mission. In church planting history healing has been instrumental in revealing God’s power even in the darkest and most difficult contexts.

**Emotional Healing**
*Hikikomori* is the Japanese word for Depression. Japan has one of the highest teenage suicide rates in the world. We know behind the smiles of work colleagues, friends and family there is much brokenness. If we are called to reconciliation work then we must realise God wants to heal broken relationships and emotions.

**Healing structural Injustice**
God is not just interested in ‘spiritual things’. Everything is spiritual. There are no dualisms with God, no spirit/matter divide. God desires the healing of structures that are in place to oppress people. There are governments, rules, laws and policies that dehumanise, demoralise and break people. The IMF, World Bank and other policy makers who keep countries, governments and, ultimately, people in poverty. Just think about the chaos of our continent right now. The situations in Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Zimbabwe. The Anglican Church has a noticeable legacy of speaking out. From Trevor Huddleston to Tutu and beyond. Clergy who have spoken out for those who have no voice, whose voice has been lost in the cacophony of shouting led by the global advertisers. God cares for the broken, lonely, forgotten, destitute, the widow and her children, the illegal immigrant with no rights, no documentation. Trafficked women held against their wills. The structures that keep those atrocities alive God wants to heal.
1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 2 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 3 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 4 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” 8 For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

9 Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” 13 He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. 15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. 17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” 20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Read the story and discuss how this might affect your own understanding of holistic healing ministry.

Ideas

• Plan a healing service in your Parish church. Identify and invite people from the community who you know are sick with the specific intention of praying for healing. Ask the Rector to use anointing oil.
• Identify places of trauma in your local community (an incident during apartheid, a recent accident, murder, social unrest or riot) and arrange for a service to be held at that location. (Psalm 106:38)
• Arrange to go hospital visiting with a group from the church seeking to pray with patients for healing.