

It was rumored that the owner of a certain hardware store had discovered a cure for arthritis. As you might imagine, this stirred a great deal of interest in the small town where the hardware store was located. One day, the locals saw a little old lady, bent over on her cane, enter the store for a visit. A little later this same lady came out walking almost perfectly straight with her head held high. The crowd cheered. "It's a miracle!" they declared. Then they wondered. What did the owner of the hardware store do that allowed this poor lady to overcome her affliction? **The little old lady explained the so-called miracle. "He sold me," she said, "a longer cane."**

I will admit, it's not a great joke. But it does frame our topic for the day. **Here's a question I want you to consider does Jesus heal people today? There is no doubt that in many instances in the New Testament, Jesus performed works of healing. HE HEALED BODIES AS WELL AS MINDS.**

Today in Luke's reading a GREAT HEALING takes place. A MAN NAMED LEGION WHO IS POSSESSED BY DEMONS IS FREED FROM THEM. Yes, healing bodies played a big role in Jesus' ministry. And in today's event, he not only healed the body but also the spirit. **The question is, does Jesus still heal people today?**

**I must tell you that there are many Christians who believe Jesus healed people during New Testament times but doubt that Jesus heals people today.** Don't get me wrong. These people are not agnostics or atheists. They are very orthodox in many of their other beliefs. Yet they cannot bring themselves to believe that Jesus still heals today. **Many of them have reasons for this.**

**For one thing, many of these people have become disenchanted by some so-called Christian healers who have taken advantage of people at their moment of greatest need.** Many of them have miss used by others due to their deep feelings of hurt and this has turned them off. You and I can appreciate their feelings. **There is nothing worse than those who take advantage of weaker people in the name of Christ.**

*Philip Yancey tells the story of a young theological student who years ago went to a service conducted by a well-known faith healer. In this meeting a doctor was carried in on a stretcher. This doctor had been diagnosed with incurable cancer.*

There in the meeting this doctor got up and walked around and everyone cheered wildly. He was told he had six months to live, but tonight he believed that God had healed him. The young man told Yancey, ***"I had never known such certainty of faith before. My search was over; I had seen proof of a living God in those people on the stage."*** So impressed was he with this proof that God healed this man that he tried to follow up and talk with this doctor. A week later he listened excitedly as the phone rang in the doctor's home. When the phone was answered, the young man explained the reason for the call. There was a long silence.

***"Who are you,"*** a woman's voice finally came back over the phone line. Another long silence. Then she spoke in a flat voice, pronouncing each word slowly. ***"My . . . husband . . . is . . . dead."*** **Just that one sentence, nothing more, and she hung up. That's when the young theology student gave up on God.** What a sad, sad story. But that is one reason some people don't believe that Jesus heals today, the actions of a few who have abused their calling as servants of God.

**But there's another more compelling reason for them to question whether Jesus heals today. Many of them have seen people they love suffer terribly from a disease.** They have prayed for their loved ones and they have seen no change in their condition. So, these believers have grown calloused, disenchanted. And who can blame them? **The silence of God can sometimes be quite dispiriting.**

Some of these followers of Christ who question whether Christ heals today have concluded that God has placed us in a lawful universe that precludes specific healing acts. They believe that, in place of miraculous acts of healing, God has given us the wonders of medical science. God works today through great doctors, and through wondrous technology, and through amazing drugs rather than through any supernatural miracles. And who can doubt the wonders of modern medical technology? **So, these believers make a compelling case for their lack of faith in healing miracles.**

**And finally, many of these conscientious Christians have concluded that it would be unfair if God healed some people today, but not others.** Why would God heal one person's arthritis, but not another's cancer particularly if both were righteous persons? Above all things, says scripture, **GOD IS JUST.**

Thus, these conscientious followers of our Lord believe with all their heart that Jesus did heal people two thousand years ago, but not today. **They believe that Jesus healed people in the New Testament only for the purpose of bringing people to faith.**

**HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER, Healing was not his primary purpose, teaching and preaching were.** He healed only to help people understand who he was and why he was sent. And certainly, many did believe in him because they saw his power to heal.

**Have you ever thought about what it would have been like to live in Jesus' time when medicine was so primitive?**

Obviously, there were no antibiotics nor were there any FDA approved drug therapies.

Pliny the Elder, a Roman historian, published an encyclopedia around 70 A.D., just after the time of Jesus. Pliny called his work, *Natural History*. In his *Natural History* Pliny revealed the generally low condition of medical science in the world during Jesus' time. He told how physicians prescribed curious concoctions for their patients. *These concoctions were made from ashes of such things as a burnt wolf's skull, stags' horns, heads of mice, the eyes of crabs, owl's brains, the livers of frogs and other like elements.* For dysentery these doctors administered powdered horses' teeth. A cold in the head was cured by kissing a mule's nose. Remember that, any of you who have the sniffles. Don't reach for the Allerest. **Just look for a friendly mule.**

**Now imagine, if you will, that into this primitive world where people had little hope of being cured by any other means came a man who could but speak a word and the blind could see and the lame walk.** No wonder people believed that he was from God. **JESUS HEALED PEOPLE.** We all believe that. **The question is... does he still heal people today?**

**I want to say to you that, YES, there is evidence that Christ still heals people today.**

The world famous Mayo Clinic was founded by Dr. Will Mayo and his brother, Charles. Dr. Will Mayo once spoke these encouraging words: *"I have seen patients that were dead by all standards. We knew they could not live. But I have seen a minister come to the bedside and do something for [a patient] that I could not do, although I have done everything in my professional power. But something touched some immortal spark in [that patient] and in defiance of medical sense, that patient lived."* Thus spoke Dr. Will Mayo. **YES, THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT CHRIST STILL HEALS PEOPLE TODAY.**

C.S. Lewis once told of a woman he knew whose thighbone was eaten through with cancer. It took three people to move her into a bed. The doctors predicted she had only a few months of life. The nurses, who knew better, predicted a few weeks. A minister came to her bedside, laid hands on her and prayed. A year later the patient was walking and the man who took the last X-ray photos of her thigh was saying: *"It's miraculous."*

Some of you could undoubtedly share with me stories of people you know whom doctors had given up on, but somehow people prayed, and the doctors were proved wrong. **YES, MIRACLES DO HAPPEN!!**

**Respected evangelist Tony Campolo** talks about being in the chapel of a Mid-West College on a particular evening. As he was delivering his lecture, a woman walked down the aisle, accompanied by a young boy whose legs were in braces. She asked for prayer for her son, that he might be healed. So Campolo delayed his lecture, and some people gathered with him to pray for this boy with bad legs. **Nothing happened. They all left.**

**Several years later Campolo was back in that same area, and a woman came up to him and spoke to him.** "Do you remember me?" she asked. "No," said Campolo. "Have we met before?" "Yes," she answered. "I came to the college for your lecture, and I interrupted and asked if you would pray for my son, who was in leg braces." "Oh yes," Campolo said. "I remember. How is he?" ***"He is healed,"*** the woman answered. "This is my son, standing right next to me." "That's wonderful," said Campolo. "How did that happen?"

"We prayed," she said. "That night when we got home and he went to bed, he started crying. His legs hurt against the braces. Over a period of time his legs grew straighter, and the doctor said he didn't understand it but my son was healed."

Of course Campolo was thrilled to see the power of God at work in such a way. He went to a group back home and told them this story, and most were thrilled to hear it. But one of the folks said, ***"I don't think it could happen that way; it doesn't fit my thinking."***

**Don't be surprised that someone responded like that. There may be someone in this congregation today who would respond in much the same way.** You may be asking in your heart, ***"If Christ healed that boy's legs, why doesn't he heal my nephew? Why doesn't he heal my mother because of her cancer? Why did he allow my Dad to have that heart attack?"*** It is a complicated question with no satisfactory answer. Again, please understand that it is the exception and not the rule. But there have been too many people who have reported that the doctors told them they did not have a chance, **and yet they made what can only be called a miraculous recovery. We simply cannot dismiss their testimonies.**

**We know that some miracles could be explained if we knew all the facts.** We're not naïve. We know that some healings may grow out of the strong connection between the mind and the body. Some people make themselves sick because of what Zig Ziglar calls **"STINKING THINKING."** Why shouldn't other people use healthy thoughts to think themselves to wellness.

Back in 1974 Robert Ader, a psychologist at the University of Rochester, did a brilliant study discovering for the first time the role of the mind in relation to the immune system. He demonstrated what most of us have always felt, that the condition of the mind and the emotions can have a profound effect on the condition of the body. A new science came into our vocabulary: **PSYCHONEUROIMMUNOLOGY**--the mind's effect on the immune system. And we know there is truth to this science.

Some people would contend that this mind-body connection is the explanation of all such healing. They point to how often Jesus said, **"Your faith has made you well."** And certainly, that was part of it. When people believe in Jesus, it might very well unlock streams of healing within the body.

But that brings us to the real question: **What about those people who believe in Christ whose bodies are not healed?** The truth of the matter is that this is more often the case than not. More than simple belief must be at work in cases where healing does occur.

**Of course, every good doctor will tell you that there are simply things about healing that they do not understand.** They have seen people whom they thought would never leave the hospital who do. Some of these people are those who have "little faith." Some of them are miserable human beings but still, they got well.

Others were people of glowing optimism with many friends praying for them and caring for them, yet they remained in pain and eventually they died. **There is no simple explanation AS TO WHY SOME PEOPLE HEAL AND OTHER PEOPLE DON'T.**

**In today's Gospel, I am sure no one expects the cast away, Legion to be healed.** He was possessed by evil spirits and his life was doomed forever. But through his FAITH IN JESUS, and through THE POWER OF JESUS, he was made well. What was Jesus trying to show us? What was he trying to teach us through this man's sickness? ***He asks the man his name. "Legion," which means, "many."*** He was struggling with many troubles, many challenges that separated him from the world. Jesus healed him, helped him to find his way. **AND YOU? What is your name?** Are you too, struggling with troubles/challenges that are separating you from God/others/the world? Do you need healing too?

**Many good people need healing and have experienced healing that was REAL, with no explanation, except the power of prayer.**

**There is much about healing and faith we do not understand, but here is what I believe.**

Whenever you have a need, whatever it might be for healing, for a loved one who is going through a difficult time, for guidance in a time of deep uncertainty. **Whatever your need is—TAKE IT TO GOD IN PRAYER.**

If it is truly life shattering, ask others to pray for you as well. **And then trust God.** God does answer prayer. Sometimes it's not exactly how we hoped, sometimes it's not on our timetable, **BUT GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYER.**

The important thing is to trust God's love for you. If you trust God, everything will work according to God's plan, **and God's plan is always for THE GOOD OF HIS CHILDREN.**

***"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people."***

**I believe Jesus still heals people today, especially through the Prayers of Others. TRUST HIM.** And believe that all things, even FAITH, can make you well. **YES, TRUTH BE KNOWN, God works for the BEST in ALL PEOPLE. Amen.**