

WEST VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN SERMON
"Ordinary People, Extraordinary Healing"
Sunday, August 3, 2014
Guest: Pastor Christy Pierce

PURPOSE/BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVE:

***For the Holy Spirit to pour faith into people that Jesus still
heals people today - and for people to be willing to risk stepping out
and praying for healing***

Good Morning. Thanks so much for inviting me to be with you today. Many friends in this church, not just Kim☺ Honor to be your guest preacher.

This morning, we are focusing on the power of Jesus to heal people. We are going to be focusing on a specific passage in the Gospel of Luke, which beautifully models what happens when ordinary people step out in faith to pray for healing....

The passage is in Luke, Chapter 5 – you can grab your Bible, and turn to Luke 5 or if you'd prefer – you can follow along on the big screens as I read:

Passage: Luke 5:12-26 (NIV)

Luke 5:12-26

The Man With Leprosy

¹² While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy.^a When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

^a The Greek word was used for various diseases affecting the skin—not necessarily leprosy.

¹⁴ Then Jesus ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

¹⁵ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

¹⁷ One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

In the passage we just read, the text says the people came to hear Jesus and to be healed of their sicknesses. Have you ever noticed that if you read about the life of Jesus in the Gospels – pretty much every page has Jesus healing people in some way.

As you read through the gospels and the Book of Acts, you will see not only Jesus – but ordinary people, His disciples, and then 72 others who are baby Christians – step out in faith, and pray for healing, and when they do that –

Extraordinary things happen.

One of the things I love about this church is that you are people of the Word. You are people who are committed to following Jesus and wanting to be more like Him.

If we are serious about becoming more like Jesus, it's important to ask ourselves this question: "Is Jesus still healing people today?" And if so, what does that look like?

Now, I have to admit to you that when it comes to Jesus healing people – most of my life, I wasn't just skeptical – but actually pretty hostile to the concept healing. You see, I grew up in a family with lots of medical doctors. I considered myself an intellectual who also happened to be a Christian. I believed in God, I read the Bible – I just sort of skipped over the parts of Jesus healing people. I thought that miracles and healing were for Jesus & the disciples back then. The whole God healing people today thing, well – to be honest, I thought it was a little weird.

Part of that was I spent most of my professional life before full time ministry in Washington, DC running political campaigns -- in a cut throat world where being politically

correct was more important than anything else. On presidential campaigns – you sometimes have to fly to 5 cities in one day. I remember one trip to Iowa....

27 Chickens or Iowa Helicopter Story

Kind of embarrassing huh? My heart was pretty darn prideful. When the campaign ended I weighed about 100 pounds, was exhausted and sick – and I came home to Kansas City where my family was in crisis. My sister had been bitten by a copperhead snake and went to the ER (ER – No we didn't bring the snake in. Really?) Turns out she wasn't only bitten by a poisonous snake, but one that also had a bacterial infection – and consequently, the infection began attacking every organ in her body. She spent months in hospitals and almost died. Desperate, we went to every church we could find that prayed for healing. Pretty soon, I got invited to go with one of these groups from Fuller Seminary to Africa to be part of the “healing prayer team” -- Ha! Are you kidding? I went along as an observer – a rookie at best in healing prayer.

AFRICA STORY ---

God has a sense of humor doesn't He? Sending the most skeptical, prideful, Washingtonian to Africa to see that God is still in the business of healing miraculously today.

Since that day in Africa, God has graciously allowed me to see over and over miracles of his healing – overseas, in conferences, right here at local churches. We are often asked to come to Stanford ICUs, or the PIC unit at Packard – for cases where doctors felt that patient had no hope medically. We see God healing not just the body, but the heart and mind – we see people healed of things like depression, broken marriages, addictions.

But, this is very important for you to hear:

While I've seen Jesus heal time and again as we've prayed for people, I want to emphasize that I've also experienced the heartache of seeing people NOT healed. My mom died of cancer 6 years ago – my family & prayer teams just as hard for her—as we did for the man in the coma in the same ICU she was in – who lived. There are “why” questions when it comes to healing that we just don't understand this side of heaven.

Jesus has been very kind to each me some important things about healing which I'd love to share with you guys humbly this morning. I believe that God heals in many different ways – He heals through good doctors and medicine, God heals the heart through good therapists and good friends. The kind of healing I want to talk about this morning is the healing power of God through prayer – like what we just saw in the Bible passages. As I do that now, I want to encourage you this way: Don't believe in God's healing power just because Christy saw it, or because your Pastor Kim believes God healing people... I invite you to simply be open – and then ASK GOD to SHOW YOU – what He wants you to know.....

Some of the most important lessons I've learned about Jesus and healing are actually present right here in the passages we read this morning – and I want to drill down into the text-- and think about them with you this morning....

The first lesson from our text in Luke is this:

- 1) **Jesus healed people when He was alive – and God is still healing people today.**

Over 50% of Jesus' ministry was healing or setting the captives free. When Jesus announced his ministry – he said the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me to preach good news, to heal the sick and to set the

captives free. It's also clear that Jesus doesn't "hog" healing for Himself. He gives the ministry of healing away. Not just to the disciples – but He keeps giving it away to normal, ordinary Christ followers....

Let's look at Luke 10

Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-two

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two^a others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'¹⁰

What I find really is funny about this passage is that Jesus entrusts the ministry of healing to the ROOKIES! These people are brand new believers! He sends them out to pray for healing and they have no idea what they are doing.....

When Jesus went from town to town preaching the GOOD NEWS – part of the GOOD NEWS WAS healing -- If you look at the books of Acts and the NT – healing often “set the table” for preaching. Many people came to faith in Jesus through a healing experience and after that, were interested in hearing a sermon about this Jesus who healed them.

In John, Chapter 14 – Jesus says this:

John 14:11-12 (NIV)

¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ¹² ***I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me***

a Some manuscripts *seventy*; also in verse 17

*will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*¹

Healing prayer was a normal part of the Christian life in the early church...and the bible makes it clear that healing prayer isn't just for the "experts"
Brings me to my next point --

2) You can be an ordinary person and pray for healing.

In my Washington days – I had these pictures in my mind about what healing prayer looked like – I had visions like I'd seen on TV hitting folks on the head saying, In Jesus name, be heeaaaled...and it freaked me out. It's taken me some time to realize that you can pray for healing and be a normal person. Folks, I am one of the most ordinary people you will ever meet – a mom who has bad days, a wife who makes mistakes constantly, sometimes faith filled –sometimes faith-less – I am CONSTANTLY amazed at how God graciously will use a broken person like me to pray for healing. God loves PEOPLE so much, He'll use just about anyone who will step out and pray for healing, regardless of how faith-filled they are!

O PORTLAND OREGON STORY – man with injured knee....

I'm curious – has anyone here this morning had an experience of God healing you through prayer – you don't need to tell us the details – but in just one word – would anyone be willing to share if God has healed you of something?

- 1) Any of you ever pray for healing for someone else and they got healed?

¹ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

2) Any of you ever pray for someone for healing and they didn't get better?

I have. Yes, I've seen miracles, but I've had to do funerals because the person didn't get better. Healing can be confusing. We can get disappointed or discouraged and even give up when it comes to praying.

OUR STORY – Many of you know my husband, Ben, So many of you have supported our family during the past 3 ½ years and we are very grateful beyond words...it's been a rough season for us....

Right before Ben's accident, my daughter, Corey, was riding a horse and had a bad accident. 6 days later – I'm taking care of her with a bad concussion at home – and the phone rings...Paramedics – Ben's bike accident on edgewood road.

STORY (add in)

We are so thankful to God that He saved my husband's life. And my daughter's life. 2 miracles of healing that Jesus graciously did. At the same time, the last years haven't been easy. 2 family members with brain trauma. Coreys lyme

We have good days and bad days. Corey has been a hero fighting to keep going at school despite the pain. We still pray for healing daily for her – and we aren't going to stop, but it's hard – and you can wonder, "Is God hearing me? Is He listening?"

My friend Ken Blue wrote a book called Authority to Heal when his wife had stage 4 cancer – he said,

"Whether or not healing prayer works, I don't intend to ever stop – because the Bible commands me to pray for healing."

Ken Blue, Authority to Heal

I agree with Ken, but he brings up a really important question – one that the PCC staff brought up this week – what IS stopping us from praying for healing more? If we believe Jesus has called us to pray for healing, why do we hesitate –

As we poll people on this -- we've identified 10 common reasons – BUT I'll tell you the top 2 – (1) "I feel inadequate. (2)What if it doesn't work?"

I like to tell them my all time favorite quote on healing:
"Your inadequacy is your first qualification" Leanne Payne, The Healing Presence.

I also give them some practical tips about what to do when you don't see healing happen right away.

Practical Things To Do When Healing Doesn't Happen Right Away

- You keep praying. After doing 20 years of this – to KEEP praying when I don't see healing happen right away. Because I've learned that Jesus loves that person more than I ever could – and He is always up to something good even if we can't see it immediately.
 - Remember that your job is to pray, but JESUS is the healer.
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Folks, we don't have power to heal anyone. It's not our power, it's Jesus, through the power of the HS, moving through us as we pray for healing.

O You watch for the good things God is doing in the midst of the hardship, and for healing that God maybe doing which is a different kind of blessing.

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- You stand with that person & love them in their pain.
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There's nothing worse than being in pain ALONE! For me, if I pray for someone and they don't get healed – I always hope they walk encouraged and ministered to in some way. It's a "win" to me if the person experiences the love and Presence of Jesus when we pray – regardless of whether healing happens or not. Sometimes people will come to me so crushed in spirit, having prayed for something for so long and say, "Christy, I don't have any faith anymore to pray for that." And I say, "That's ok. We are going to have faith FOR you –

Here is what NOT to say to someone who isn't healed....

"The reason God didn't heal you is that you didn't have enough faith." UGH!

I get really angry when I hear that. I believe JESUS gets angry when that happens. It takes a lot of courage for someone to ask for healing prayer – and to be told that you aren't healed due to lack of faith – well that just adds insult to injury.

In the bible, there are certainly times when faith is mentioned when it comes to healing – where Jesus will say something like, "Daughter, your faith has healed you, go in peace." But there are other times where there didn't appear to be any faith present and the person is healed...Remember the story of Jesus and him healing Lazarus who had been dead 3 days Think about it -- How much faith does a dead person have?

You don't need a Ph.D. to pray for healing – pretty simple really.

In fact, my kids all know how to pray for healing. One summer when my family was vacationing in Maine, our cousin who is an atheist had a lung infection – she heard we prayed for people and showed up at our cabin on the lake. While the rest of us were trying to decide how to pray for cousin Debbie who doesn't believe in Jesus -- Annie took her by the hand to the rocking chair on the porch and said, Hey Deb—we hear you're sick. How about we pray for you? We walk in and she's already praying. "God, you know I think Debbie is really special. I love her. Heal her lungs in Jesus name. Amen." OK – well I guess we don't need to pray, Annie has it covered. Laughed. 1 year later, Debbie's doctors say her lungs are full healed. Hmm...

My friend Jordan says when it comes to healing, just remember the 3 letter word -- Try. 😊

Healing isn't about the a special gift, or a specific healing PRAYER or MODEL that always works... – it's about loving Jesus and loving others in His name.

Possible place for guinea pigs at 5:30pm service

Christy – that whole TRY thing is just too much for me – can't imagine praying for someone for healing – OK – I get it. So if TRY is to much, then BRING—like the paralytics friends BRING someone you know who needs healing to those who've done it more –

OPPORTUNITIES AT WEST VALLEY FOR HEALING PRAYER?

TODAY? After service? Or each week??

- **Prayer Teams**

- Elders
- Prayer Cards

When Jesus heals, it often looks different than we expect.

That's true in both bible passages we just read

¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

My husband, Ben and I have helped plant churches in India among the untouchables. They are the modern day leper – taught for thousands of years that their touch defiles, if you encounter an untouchable – cover their head, erase their footsteps.

I'll never forget the 1st time I went – was braced for what I'd see – didn't know if I could handle the poverty, the oppression that this severe – Jeep pulled up to village. Jamasekie – Victory to Jesus. Little India Boy. Like the leper – that untouchable boy experienced perhaps the most important healing of all – healing of his core identity. He experienced the love of Jesus – and it changed his whole life.

Do you know who you are? ***Do you understand how much God loves you?***

The paralytic didn't. He felt God had rejected him. In the Hebrew worldview, people back then thought sickness meant God was punishing you! Try to imagine, for just a minute, how it might have felt to be lowered on a mat to the feet of Jesus, expecting yet another rejection and instead --Jesus looks at you with deep compassion and says -- "Friend, your sins are forgiven" –

Can't you see the Pharisees rolling their eyes! Who is this guy? Isn't Jesus supposed to be a healer! How lame! – "your sins are forgiven" Jesus knows what they

are thinking – so he blows away that prideful argument when he says....look at verse 2

Luke 5: ² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”
The man leaves healed physically, emotionally, spiritually....

PAUSE

When it comes to healing, Jesus is often working on many levels that we can't see immediately. We always pray for the need the person brings, but we are aware that God may have a different agenda – is always interested in the WHOLE person – the body, mind and spirit.

OTHER STORY –

Singapore young man – shot in head – ended up at Stanford in coma. Docs said no hope. We went down. Prayed – came out of coma. Mom converts from Buddhism to Christianity. They go back to Singapore. Their sister gets cancer. Comes to Stanford. She dies, but before she died – she became a Christian. The family invited us to Singapore to pray for some relationships in their family that needed healing. Lovely journey with a lovely family – last part kind of cool – the family is a large real estate developer in Singapore and felt God leading them to give 3 million dollars to Stanford Hospital. The only catch was that we be allowed to preach about Jesus at a big event at Stanford hospital.

In every part of this story – JESUS was doing something unexpected as we prayed for healing....

I'm honestly not sure which miracle was bigger? – Colin coming out of the coma, Dorothy's conversion, Sally coming to Christ before she died, the family's relational healing....or that we got to talk about Jesus at Stanford Hospital? Hard to choose...

Is praying for healing REALLY that important for followers of Jesus today?

PAUSE

How many people here this morning/tonight within a 5 mile radius do you think need healing of some kind? How many people are in physical pain right now in their homes this am (tonight) ? How many marriages need God's healing? How many people in YOUR neighborhood need to know that God loves them and is still in the business of healing broken hearts?

Expand the radius to 10 miles? 20 miles?

Friends, until we get to heaven – where there is no more suffering, no more pain – no more sorrow and sickness or cancer or broken hearts –

Until we die and go to our real home –

We live here – and in this life – one thing we can count on is that we, and people around us will face pain and trials of many kinds....

When we do – we need to know that we follow a God of compassion and love—who cares deeply when we are hurting–

We need to know that we are NOT alone, but that God is indeed with us and loves us –

That's why I NEVER shrink back from prayer for those in need – because I know that God is always going to move in some way because that's who He is – a god of compassion and mercy –

**We boldly pray for the miracle, we leave the rest to God – and we trust Him to be big enough to handle our sickness and pain – even when we don’t understand the whys....
The bible says, ‘I am close to the broken hearted.’
Oh – but there is one last, perhaps undercover reason – that I THINK Jesus wants us to pray for healing
Last point....**

3) *God invites us* into healing prayer because He knows it will bring US blessing & joy.

Remember those 72 Jesus sent out to pray for healing – the Rookies with no experience – look what happened to them:

Luke 10: Verse 17

The seventy two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” Luke 10:17

Then Jesus says....

“I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was YOUR good pleasure.” Verse 21

When we pray for healing, 3 things happen all at once –

The person being prayed FOR is blessed,

The person PRAYING is blessed

And, it brings JOY to the Father’s heart....

Friends – God doesn’t NEED any of us to pray for healing to heal someone...

He LETS US IN ON IT –

So that we might experience more of HIM than we ever imagined, – blessing as we pray – and JOY when we see Him move.

Let’s pray.
