

Being Loved Into Life – based on Mark 5:21-43
Aspen Community UMC
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Page 1 of 6

*(The healing stories of Jesus give us a clue into health and healing from a spiritual point of view.
They also give us some principles with which to think about health care today.)*

I love the stories of Jesus. This is a story within a story – two healing stories in one.

One part of the story is about the child of a wealthy and prominent citizen –
the leader of the synagogue –
one who you would expect to get the best of care.

The second is a woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years.
She would not have been allowed in the synagogue because of this condition.

It made her an outcast.

She had gone to all the doctors she could go to.

She had spent all her money in the health care system that was in place at that time.

The system had no more to offer
either the little girl or the woman.

The woman was frightened for Jesus to recognize her because she was an outcast.

So as the crowd followed Jesus – she maneuvered her way into it -
and getting close to him - touched the hem of his garment –
hoping he would not notice her - yet to draw his healing energy.
And when she did there was a power that went from him to her -
the Christ energy.

Didn't Jesus say in the gospel of John, chapter 14,
that we can do even greater things than he?

"The one who believes in me will do the works that I do, and, in fact,
will do greater works than these."

We still do not know what to make of this – do we?

What if we took this seriously – my friends?

I believe Jesus did these things.

I believe there have been healers in the course of history
who are so in touch with the vibrational frequencies of their own being that they can
focus that power in ways that others describe as a miracle
and do things that are out of the scope of ordinary reality.

Perhaps they are so few and far between
that most of recorded history has paid little attention to them.
Perhaps we need to be open to learning from all corners of the earth and all healing traditions.

I think we have not even come close to what Jesus talked about
because I think for the most part we have failed to do the interior work it takes
to flow with the healing energies of our own bodies.

Or connect with the source of life itself.

This is the spiritual journey.

And I believe religion has failed us – or perhaps we have failed religion
through being focused on doctrine and who is in and who is out -
same as when Jesus walked the earth.



Maybe we got sidetracked in a world of commercialized medicine.

Had we not done this we might have learned to be healers.

I don't mean to be excessively critical of western medicine –
for it can do some amazing things.

But I do believe we lost something along the way.

The healing stories of Jesus may give us a clue
into the mystery of illness and health from a spiritual point of view.

And that is the opportunity.



For us today - there is a companion question.

How do we create an optimal system for those who are not healers themselves -
in a country of 307 million people on a planet of 6 to 7 billion people?

This too is what I want to talk about today.



Health care is on our minds these days.

What is it?

It is a maze of procedures and substances
with commercial value and vested interests.

So that with the exception of acupuncture – almost everything that is not western
which includes many healing and health measures – holistic measures –
ayurvedic and naturopathic
even serious attention to nutrition - are often scoffed at.
Not because they are not effective – but because were they to become prominent -
they would seriously threaten the commercial interests
of things that can be manufactured or patented –
certified and sold in the healthcare marketplace.
It is not to say that practitioners and methods need not be examined.
But - make no mistake - the business of treating and diagnosing illness is big business.



It is a monumental task to try and reform health care
because of the jobs and intermediary roles that might be eliminated.
Simply said - jobs and supply lines and livelihoods are at stake -
as unintended consequences of reform.
We are in the midst of economic paradigm shift.
All kinds of work processes are changing.
It may be the layers of management and employees in a health insurance company -
or the education and professionalization of medical personnel -
specialties and subspecialties.
It may be the manufacture and sale of medical equipment and pharmaceuticals.
We have built massive structures to support our system of western allopathic medicine.
But - it is a system based on disease – not on health.
It depends on disease.



Again – much of our health care system is amazing and beneficial.
But it has gone awry and will take a lot of courage on the part of office holders
and health care professionals and – you and I - to re-imagine it a different way.
But we must not let the task go – with the epitaph “died in committee” in Washington.

Do we advocate for programs and procedures and medications
that seem to be what we need?

In other words – do we recommend only out of self-interest?

Or can we find some guidance from the great healer we know
to help us rise above self interest or fall on the other side – apathy?
We can find principles and values to keep us grounded.



Jesus treated the most prominent and capable - and the most vulnerable.
And - he did it with apparent ease.
What it tells me is that it should not be that hard.

I realize that our systems are business models.
Insurance companies need to make money.
And there is no perfect system.

But if and when we create a system - it needs to be available
to the most capable and the most vulnerable –
and everybody in between - in the same way.
And it needs to reflect some principles that emerge out of the stories we hold dear
like the one we read today.
Compassion - protection for the most vulnerable – service before profit –
attention to the whole person - holistic care.

I believe the work of Jesus – if we take it seriously – leads us there.
It could mean more taxes – but that might remind us that we are responsible for each other.
That seems a far world away from the free markets we like.
Perhaps the market place is not the place for health care – or at least all of it -
unless there are some values woven tightly into its very core.



Jesus shows us that love itself has great healing power.
He tells us that love has the power to forgive and reconcile.
Love has the power to redeem.
That is not just a sweet sounding phrase.
Forgiveness allows the forgiver and the forgiven to release the energy of the situation.

In Chinese terms that allows the “chi” to flow – the life force to flow – or flow again.

Forgiveness and reconciliation and redemption are real in our bodies.

They are not just nice religious words.

These things are practical – even if we do learn them in church.

We learn them in the practice and living our faith.

No system – government sponsored or commercially sponsored – can do it all.

But the ideal – the values –are important.

compassion -

protection of the most vulnerable –

service before profit -

and caring for the whole person – or holistic care



I want to give you one last image before I close.

A business executive became depressed.

Things were not going well at work.

He was bringing his problems home with him every night.

Every evening he would eat dinner in silence -

shutting out his wife and five year-old daughter.

Then he would go into the den and read the paper - using it

to wall his family out of his life.

After several nights of this,

one evening his daughter took her little hand and pushed the newspaper down.

She jumped into her father's lap,

wrapped her arms around his neck

and hugged him strongly.

The father said abruptly, “Honey, you are hugging me to death!”

“No, Daddy,” the little girl said, “I’m hugging you into life!”



Well, in a way Jesus hugged people into life.

There are surely things we can learn from that
as we live our lives and care for those we love.

We do get sick and sometimes cannot get well.

At other times, getting rid of an illness does not feel like healing.

We are still learning.

When we are asked to contribute to the conversation about reform -
and I for one – receive emails regularly – asking for input and action -
and I expect you do too – we have something to say.

The stories of Jesus do call out to us. They do want our attention.

They want our reflection.

They want our action.

There was a power in Jesus that was witnessed and lived -
and that's why they left us the story.

We are still trying to hear it.

We are still trying to live into it.

We are still trying to learn to be healers.

May we hold the healing stories dear – read them over and over -
let them work on us – let them touch our lives.

There are times that we all need “loving back into life.”

But – the stories also point out to us something about systems
and the way systems let people down.

The stories connect us to the source of life
and the claim of Christ on our lives.

They guide us about a topic of importance to all of us.