

Sixth Sunday After Epiphany
February 12, 2012
Ordinary Life Rhythms: Healing
2 Kings 5: 1-14, Mark 1: 40-45

Isaiah [a little boy in our congregation] is right, his dad Corey not only looks like Jesus – he is Jesus! But so also are George, Gerry, Larry, Becky, Deanne, Philip – we are Jesus to those in need in the world.

Who do we identify with in these stories – of Jesus healing the leper, or of Elisha healing Naaman of his leprosy?

I suspect that we readily identify with the leper, with Naaman – as ones who are in need and in need of God's help, God's comfort, God's healing.

However I wonder whether we identify with these who were in need of healing in another way.

The leper seemed to wonder if Jesus had time for him – “if you are willing?”

– whether it might be an imposition to bother Jesus with his request for healing, for being set free.

Do we wonder if God has time for us; do we wonder whether we are a burden to God (or to others)

– is God willing to heal us?

Does God have time to notice us, to be concerned for us,

Dare we approach God and ask to be made whole?

And if we dare approach God for healing, are we as Naaman?

– open to God healing us, but not in weird ways

– hospitals OK, praying in general sort of ways OK

– but laying on of hands in the middle of a worship service, or dipping in the river

– a little too weird

– and if that is our attitude, could we miss God's “willingness” to heal us?

We always seems to identify with those in need in Scripture

– because we see ourselves as ones in need

– maybe not with leprosy, but in some way.

I do not want to diminish the necessity of our developing courage, such as the leper, to come to Jesus with what is troubling us

– because he is the author of life, he is the one who is making all things new!

But, what about identifying with someone else in these accounts? What about Elisha, Jesus?

We are the people of God, the body of Christ.

Jesus says we will do greater things than he, when the Spirit comes upon us (cf. John 14:12 – “Very truly I tell you, all who have faith in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father – because the Spirit will be poured out on them),

It seems that in light of Jesus’ words – not only can we identify with those Jesus ministered to,

we can also identify with the ministering Jesus in ministering to others

I received a letter this week that expresses just this: we as North Suburban ministered as Jesus would minister.

It was a letter from Aspen Schmidt in response to our reaching out to her and her family as they grieved the loss of her father, Larry –

“Roland and the rest of my church family – thank you so much for the *Tear Soup* book. My family and I loved it. We have been relating our experiences to the one’s of the woman in the book – trying to rate our grief according to hers. I know it’s not a fix, but that book has been something we’ve turned to a lot during this time. We even bought another copy for our church here. Thanks. Love you all! – Aspen”

Thank you Becky for recommending that book as a way to console Aspen and her family.

We as a community were Jesus, not only to Aspen and her family – but to her community in Wichita as well.

The Gospel is that in our being in Jesus, we can be Jesus to others.

Yes, we are broken, but we are ones who are, as Henri Nouwen calls us, *wounded healers*.

Jesus was also a *wounded healer*.

Nouwen identifies Jesus as a wounded healer who has taken on the sufferings of humanity within his own incarnate humanity

– Jesus has opened himself to humanity, but not just humanity (abstract), he opens himself to the leper, to each one of us

– to experience the same wounds, the same suffering.

This might explain Jesus being indignant.

Did the leper come to Jesus as one who only had time for the religious?

Who was so holy and set apart from all human suffering and need

That the leper approached Jesus as he would approach other religious dignitaries – who were appalled by his need, his suffering;

their unwillingness to even come near in case they might be contaminated?

Is this the leper’s view of Jesus?

– if so, he assumed Jesus **must be unwilling**.

But Jesus is indignant precisely because this is an assumption that is false

- Jesus knows our suffering
- Jesus knows for struggles
- Jesus knows our difficulties
- because he shares in these sufferings – and so he heals the leper,

Offering a word, an action of wholeness to set the leper free –

“Of course, I am willing – I am aware of what you are experiencing!”

Jesus is not engaged as an aloof bystander, or as a shaman removed from the daily rhythms of life

- Jesus is engaged, involved, God incarnate living a human life within human history, experiencing the struggles of humanity within all that makes human life difficult.

And so Jesus comes into the midst of life bringing a rhythm of healing, a rhythm of re-creation, a rhythm of shalom and wholeness.

And so, if we are like Jesus, sharing in the life of Jesus, living our lives in relation to the Trinitarian community – God

– what then marks the life of Jesus, also marks our lives

- we live our lives as a community of disciples bringing a rhythm of healing, a rhythm of re-creation, a rhythm of shalom and wholeness amid a broken world.

Do we have the courage to live our lives authentically as Christ lived his – in openness to God, in openness to the Spirit of God?

- For if we do, we offer the same word of Jesus to a suffering world, because we like Jesus, are *wounded healers*.

The reality we have been expressing this Epiphany season is that God is part of the ordinary rhythms of our lives

- and in our embracing this reality, in our living in this reality, we reveal the presence of God in the midst of our ordinary rhythms of our lives

Not just in our community, but in the world!

And in the world, **we are Jesus** to those who have a difficult time noticing or seeing that God’s healing presence is in the world.

We like Jesus have the opportunity not just to identify with the leper, but also to identify with Jesus in bringing peace, in bringing healing and wholeness, in bringing life.

After all, it is in our baptism that we identify with Jesus’ death and resurrection

- now in the power of the Spirit, we are filled with the Spirit of God, to live continuing Jesus’ ministry, offering wholeness – offering the healing reality of God.

So, as disciples of Jesus, our calling is **both** to be ones in need of Jesus' touch, as well as the ones who touch others with the touch of Jesus.

This is not something that we have merely as a resource within ourselves to share – but out of our relationship with Jesus, we share the fruit of our relationship with him, this healing, this being made whole – with those the Spirit of God leads us to

– **not as an imposition** (so that we might be put out if asked to offer healing), but as a people participating with God in God's mission of sharing the life and relationship of God with others.

As we see, hear, and dance with God in the ordinary rhythms of our lives –

we bring the healing peace of God into the lives of others so that they also might enter into seeing, hearing, and dancing with God

– **in this way we participate with God in making all things whole.**

And in living in this way – we may find strangers coming up to us asking, “If you are willing, you can make me whole?”

May our response be: “I am willing, be comforted, be made whole, be made clean!”

May we be open to be Jesus in the world.

May we pray for Jesus to be “in me” – that it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (cf Galatians 2:20).

May we be healers, forgivers, reconcilers, peacemakers, ones who set people free from sin and death

May we be like Jesus in the world!