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Mark 8:22-26

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### “Jesus’ Healing Touch”

When I saw her eyes and face, my heart sank. I have never seen a person so depressed and so deep down the pit of despair that I wanted to cradle her like a little child. I am talking about a relative in my family who was diagnosed with an aggressive type of cancer, a tumor rapidly growing in her stomach. The tumor was visible, and her body seemed weak. When I saw her I was worried about her physical condition yet what troubled me the most is her empty and lifeless eyes and her soul with no sign of hope.

Our physical illnesses and conditions are able to affect our whole lives, from our ability to be active participants in our communities and society, to ability to relate to this world in such a way that is life-giving and hopeful. These conditions limit our experience of life, challenge our relationships, block the flow of joy and happiness. They bring deep suffering into our lives and the lives of our loved ones. Yet, we know that not only our physical illnesses and conditions that could create such limitations in our lives. Any kind of loss, abuse, manipulation can leave us broken on the inside creating wounds that live on in our souls and spirits for years and years. All this brokenness in us, physical, emotional, and spiritual can create in us false beliefs that we are not enough and not worthy, that we are not lovable, that we are not gifted, that we are somehow spoiled and no one needs us or wants us. Our brokenness leaves us hanging asking questions “Why?” “Why me, God?” “Is there any hope?”

And it is here perhaps where we meet our blind man who was brought to Jesus to be healed. Did he experience some of those limitations that we just talked about? Perhaps. As a blind man, he was limited in his experiences of life, perhaps with not much hope to see this world with his eyes. He had to rely on others to support and help him. And it was the community that made the first step in his healing and brought him to Jesus and begged Jesus to touch him. Healing took probably 75-80% percent of Jesus’ whole ministry on earth. We read story after story in the Gospels of Jesus’ healing and bringing life, hope, and wholeness not only physically but emotionally and spiritually. What is very unique about this healing story in Mark 8:22-26 is the gradual nature of this healing. The first thing Jesus did is to take this man by the hand and lead him out of the village. Can you imagine what was going on in this guy’s head? Where is this person taking me? Why is he taking me somewhere else? What is going to happen? It almost seems like Jesus takes this man on a road of healing and one of the things that this blind man needed to do first is to learn to trust Jesus on this road.

Then what is very interesting is that Jesus performed his healing in steps. He first used the spittle or as the Greek text says he spat in this man’s eyes. That is shocking. We could venture into another sermon on the use of spittle in the ancient world, but I am afraid it will be long and boring. Seriously though, I do have a great article and would be happy to forward the

link to you. So after using his saliva, Jesus touched the blind man's eyes and how a good and caring doctor asked him, "Are you able to see anything?" The man responded that he could see people walking like trees. So he had vision but it was still very blurry. It is like after losing a loved one, the first shock is gone. And we don't cry anymore all the time. Existence is not as unbearable anymore as it used to, but it still hurts. Then Jesus touched the guy again. And after looking intently, he was able to see.

Now, did Jesus not succeed for the first time? Was the faith of the blind man not at work on the first attempt or did Jesus not have enough power? I am not sure I know the answers to these questions, but what seems true is how realistic this healing story is to life. The road of healing can be long, with many stumbling blocks on the way. When complete healing does not come from the first, or second, or third attempt. Surgery does not work. Treatment and medicine fail. And sometimes there is a point on the road when there is nothing can be done for the physical healing to happen. It could mean that the end of our physical life is near. Or it could mean that we have to live with this condition bearing its limitations and raising above them. And this could also be part of our road of healing, when physical healing does not come, then spiritual healing is possible.

So what Jesus does for all us on our journey of physical, emotional, and spiritual healing is he touches our lives: just like he opens up the eyes of the blind man, Jesus opens the eyes of our hearts and inner beings. Jesus gives us a gift of faith and trust, when we can see and experience the world with the eyes of faith. I have to say though it does not mean if our physical body is not healed that we do not have faith. For whatever reason, healing does not come. And I know sometimes it is hard to have faith when all those attempts failed. Then just like in the story, the people who brought the blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch him, we can be a community of faith who believes for the one who has no strength to, a community who brings this one to Jesus to be touched.

Friends, Jesus takes us by his hand and walks with us on our journey of healing. Jesus provides us with the gifts of faith, encouragement, peace, hope, the gift of community of faith, and assurance that we are loved and capable of participating in this life and capable of sharing our gifts, the gift of our very own selves, of our presence in this world. Jesus wants to touch us, heal us and make us whole. Jesus' healing touches our lives again, and again, and again, through doctors and medicine, and diets, and exercise, through encouraging words, support groups, and therapy, through our loving families and friends, through our prayer and time of worship. Jesus is here to offer his touch this morning through a special time of healing, with prayer and anointing with oil. It is an ancient tradition of the church to pray for the sick and use oil to anoint them. We read about this in James 5:14–16a:

**4 Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be**

**forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Amen**