

Healing: Jesus' Ministry and Ours

Illus: I'd like to introduce you to someone I became acquainted with at a young age, by way of English nursery rhyme--his name is Humpty Dumpty. By a show of hands, how many of you are familiar with Humpty Dumpty?

If you know the nursery rhyme, let me encourage you to recite it along with me:

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the King's horses and all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.*

Not exactly a feel good story, but I wonder, how does this story make us feel? Perhaps pity--*poor Humpty Dumpty, he was a good bloke, he deserved better.* Perhaps relief? *Better him than me.* Or how about fear? *I'd better stay away from wall-sitting or I could be next!* It likely feels a little ridiculous to even have this conversation, we are after all, talking about a hard-boiled egg. But if only brokenness were limited to hard-boiled eggs.

I know that a number of you work in the health care industry, and more than most, you spend your waking hours face to face with sickness and disease. In 2012, the Canadian Government spent an estimated \$207 billion dollars in health care. My wife is a nurse at Lions Gate hospital and every time she comes home from work she has a story about someone young, or old, or somewhere in between who's body has broken down.

But as complex as the human body is, I wonder if the brokenness associated with other aspects of our life isn't even more complex.

If you treat an infection with an antibiotic, more often than not, the body responds and the infection is vanquished. But they don't make an antibiotic that will cure the memory of a sexual assault. A visit to your family doctor won't heal a broken marriage or the wounds incurred by way of rejection.

For every hospital room I've entered, I've sat with many more people who are plagued by sickness that takes the form of fear, hatred, unforgiveness, bitterness, or pride--brokenness comes in all shapes and sizes.

illus: I can recall sitting in a living room with a couple that was desperately in need of healing. The wife was as unhappy as anyone I've ever met: anger, bitterness, and vengeance oozed from every pore. She had been wounded by someone, not intentionally, not maliciously, but wounded all the same. And she had made a choice to hold on to this wound, to rehearse it over and over again, hoping that by rehearsing it privately and publicly that she could punish the offending party. She was miserable.

Over a series of months we had talked about this wound and the way forward. But that day in their living room, I talked with her about forgiveness, about the need to release the past, to let go of her desire to punish, and in the process to experience freedom from the bitterness and hatred that was holding her captive. I pleaded with her--*there is a freedom that God has in store for you.* At one point she turned to me and snarled, *"I don't want to be free...I want to be vindicated!"*

Broken bodies, broken minds, broken emotions, broken memories. Broken trust, broken relationships, broken identity, broken sexuality.

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Even cities show signs of brokenness--riots in Vancouver after a game 7 loss, a bombing in Boston in the middle of a city-wide marathon.

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We are a culture that loves stories, but purely for entertainment value--we rarely learn from them. We do love our myths. We love the myth of invincibility--*brokenness won't happen to me*. We love the myth of self-sufficiency--*I won't let brokenness happen to me*. Imagine our shock when we discover that we have more in common with Humpty Dumpty than with our cherished myths.

But as Darrell Johnson says, "The Bible has good news for those who know the wreckage of life in a broken world, and who long to be made whole. There is a King who can put us, and the whole universe, together again."¹ This morning I want to talk about this King, about Jesus and His ministry of healing, and it's my prayer that we will see both Him and ourselves in a new light. **Pray**

Before I am finished preaching this morning, there two things I want you to know, and here's the first:

(1) Jesus' earthly ministry reveals God's will when it comes to healing.

I want to begin by inviting you to open your Bible to an unlikely place; we're not going to begin in one of the Gospels, we're going to begin by looking at Hebrews 1:1-3 (page _____ in the Blue Bibles). And we're going to begin, not by talking about healing, but by talking about epistemology--that is, how we know what we know about God.

"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

The writer of Hebrews starts off this letter with an affirmation that is foundational to the Christian faith: *God has spoken*. We know what we know about God because He has chosen to reveal Himself; God has made Himself known.

The question is: *how has God made Himself known?* Theologians speak of the two types of God's self-revelation: general revelation and specific revelation. General revelation is the knowledge of God that has been revealed through creation. As we look at creation, scientists and lay-people alike observe things like beauty, order, goodness, simplicity and complexity, intelligence, creativity, sustainability, etc. While we can learn about God through what He has made, there is much that cannot be known through general revelation.

¹ Darrell Johnson, *Good News For Humpty Dumpty*, Regent Pastors' Conference, 2003.

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Hebrews 1 speaks about **special revelation**--the knowledge of God that has been revealed through God's word (Holy Scripture), and through Jesus, God's Son.

2 Peter 1:21 says that God raised up prophets, and filled them with the Holy Spirit, so that they spoke God's words to humanity.

2 Timothy 3:16 talks about Scripture as being "*God-breathed*," that is, God-inspired-words that reveal His thoughts, ways, and actions.

In the Old Testament, God spoke to His people through the prophets; in the New Testament, God came near through His Son. Colossians 1:15 describes Jesus as "the image of the invisible God"--He is the invisible God made visible. John 1:18 says, "*No one has ever seen God, but [Jesus, God the Son], who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.*"

If we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father; to know Jesus, is to know God. Ken Blue writes, "Jesus has become the horizon of our knowledge of God. We need no longer speculate about God's character. God has disclosed His character and made clear His attitudes towards us in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ."²

And this is where epistemology intersects healing. Jesus is the exact representation of God's being, He is the invisible God made visible--all we need to know about God's character and action is found in Jesus. When we see Jesus stand with the poor, the oppressed, and the

marginalized, we know that God is standing with them. When we see Jesus forgiving His enemies, we know that God is forgiving them.

At times people ask the question, *is it God's will to heal?* Generally speaking, Jesus' earthly ministry reveals God's will when it comes to healing. In fact, if we were to summarize the ministry of Jesus, we would conclude that His ministry consisted of teaching, preaching, and healing.

Jesus came teaching--*what did He teach?* Nearly every one of His parables begins with the phrase: "*and the kingdom of God is like*". Jesus came teaching about what life looks like under God's leadership. Jesus did more than paint a picture of a preferred future, He invited people to embrace new life.

If you're going to follow Me, you're going to have to adopt a new set of values, a new way of thinking, living, and loving. In other words, you're going to have to repent. You can't stay the same and still follow Me--I'm not an add on--you've got to leave your old life behind if you want to follow.

Jesus came preaching--*what did He preach?* "*The time has come...The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*"³ In Jesus, history was reaching a climax. In Jesus, God's promise to be with His people, to heal, restore, and reconcile went to a whole new level. In Jesus, God's glorious future, the life of heaven

² Ken Blue, *Authority to Heal*, 73.

³ Mark 1:15

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began to break into the present. The long Winter was over--Spring time had come.

And Jesus came healing. Of the 35 miracles recorded in the Gospels, 28 of them (80%) are miracles of healing. Throughout the Gospels we see the whole range of healing: Jesus returned sight to the blind, He restored hearing and speech, He delivered people from oppressive spirits, He forgave sin, reconciled relationships, healed skin conditions, and blood conditions--He even raised the dead.

In Matthew 9:35-36 we read, "*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*"

Why did Jesus heal? Because God loves the world, and because the kingdom Jesus announced is all about the restoration of humanity and creation. When Jesus healed the sick He was demonstrating the reality of the kingdom. Life as heaven knows it, is a life of wholeness, where love rules the day, where peace is eternal, where relationships exist in the absence of pain, misunderstanding, and conflict.

As the kingdom of God breaks into our world, we can expect to see restoration, we can expect to see glimpses of wholeness--and this is what happened in Jesus' ministry...it is still happening today. "There is a King who can put us, and the whole universe, together again."

The first thing I want you to know is that Jesus' earthly ministry reveals God's will when it comes to healing. And here's the second:

(2) Jesus has invited us to join Him in His healing ministry.

I've just talked about "why" Jesus healed, but have you ever stopped to consider the "how?" It's simple really: Jesus took His cues from the Father, and was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus listened to the Father: John 5:19, "*Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*"

And, **Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit.** Think about it:

- Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit--Luke 1:35.
- at His baptism, the Holy Spirit rested upon Jesus--Mark 1:10.
- after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and He came out of the wilderness full of the Holy Spirit--Luke 4:1.
- Jesus chose His apostles by the Spirit--Acts 1:2.
- He cast out demons by the Holy Spirit--Matthew 12:28.
- In Acts 10:38, the apostle Peter sums up Jesus ministry saying, "*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and...he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.*"

In order for Jesus to do what He did, two things were necessary: **authority and power.**

- the word "*authority*" comes from the Greek word "*exousia*;" it implies having the right to do something. A police officer, with uniform and badge, has the authority, the "*exousia*" to pull me over and give me a ticket if I'm found to be speeding.

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- the word “power” comes from the Greek word “*dunamis*,” it implies having the ability to do something. A weight lifter has the power to lift heavy objects above their head.⁴

John Coles writes, “To have authority without power is degrading. To have power without authority is dangerous. Jesus knew that He had both authority and power to bring healing to the sick. So must we.”⁵

Jesus was given authority by the Father to do what He did, but we cannot confuse authority with independence--they are not the same thing. The ministry of Jesus was marked by His dependence on the Father and the Spirit. Jesus listened to the Father, going where he was told to go, saying what he was told to say, and doing what He saw the Father doing.

Jesus had “*authority*” but He exercised this authority moment by moment according to the Father’s instruction. And He exercised this authority with power because He filled by, and radically dependent on, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus has both authority and power, and, He has extended both authority and power to those who follow Him.

- Luke 9:1-2 says, “*1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*”

- John 14:12-13 says, “*Very truly I tell you, whoever believes 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. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*”
- Matthew 28:18-20, “*Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*”

The ministry of healing continued among the disciples, and within the early church. 1 Corinthians 12:30 talks about the spiritual gift of healing, James 5 encourages those who are sick to seek prayer for healing. Throughout history, the healing ministry of Jesus has continued; His authority and power have been extended to us.

Jesus did not *have* a healing ministry, He *has* a healing ministry. Stephen Seammonds writes, “The ministry we have entered into is the ministry of Jesus Christ, to the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world.”⁶

Jesus continues to bring healing and restoration because of God’s great love for the world and the world’s great need for healing. Healing is His ministry, but He invites us to join Him in His work.

⁴ John Coles, *Developing a Healing Ministry: A Training Manual For Churches*, 14.

⁵ Coles, 14.

⁶ Stephen Seammonds, *Ministry In The Image Of God: The Trinitarian Shape Of Christian Service*, 20.

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Since the age of twenty, God has been growing a vision in my heart for the church. And the vision that God has been growing is anything but bland--it's a vision of His church making waves in the world. Can you imagine what God would do in and through a group of women and men, old and young, who refuse to see Jesus as an add-on to their lives?

What would God do through a church that collectively laid down their lives in order to follow Jesus? Not a fair-weather following, not a half-hearted effort--I'm talking about sailing to a foreign country and then burning the boats after reaching the shore--no going back. What would God do through people like that?

Jesus taught us to pray, "*Your kingdom come, Your will be done*" because there's a large gap between the life of heaven and life here on earth. And yet, we pray this prayer because God wants to answer us--He wants His kingdom and will to come in increasing measure. God wants to see people rescued from sin and death. He wants to see people set free from bitterness, pain, and loss. He wants to see people experience His love, His healing, and His restoration.

The vision God has been growing in my heart is one that includes healing and restoration. I have been so convinced by the Scriptures that Jesus still heals today that out of obedience to Him I will continue to pray for the sick and the broken regardless of the results. It's our my responsibility to determine who, when, or how God heals, but it is our responsibility to pray for healing.

Ken Blue writes, "The kind of world in which God will eventually eliminate all suffering is not the one we live in now...The ministry of healing, like all other aspects of Christian ministry and experience is partial, provisional, and ambiguous."⁷ The reason we pray for God's kingdom to come is because it has not yet come in its fulness, but it has come in part--and with every act of healing and restoration, Jesus is demonstrating the reality of His kingdom.

Perhaps you have questions about healing--*if God loves the world and healing demonstrates the reality of His kingdom rule, then why don't we see more of it?* If you do have questions, can I ask you to do something? I want to encourage you to send me an email with your questions. I trust that throughout the coming weeks, a number of your questions are going to be covered, but we are going to take the final Sunday in this series and answer the specific questions you have.

I began this message by telling you that there were two things I wanted you to know: (1) First, that Jesus' earthly ministry reveals God's will when it comes to healing, and (2) Second, that we've been invited to join in Jesus' healing ministry.

As I conclude this morning, there are two things I want you to experience:

(1) First, this side of heaven, I want you to experience whatever measure of healing that Jesus' has in store for you. If there is brokenness in your life of any kind--relational, physical, emotional, sexual--bring it to Jesus and ask Him to bring healing and restoration

⁷ Blue, 91, 108.

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to your life. As our service concludes, our Prayer Ministry Team would love to pray with you. And there isn't a limit on the amount of times you can ask God for healing; ask Him again today. And,

(2) Second, I want you to experience the joy of praying for God's healing and restoration with the people around you--family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours. God hears our prayers; every time we pray something happens.

Response Song: at this time I would like to invite Alana and the team to come and sing a song for us--it will likely be a new song for most of you but I trust it will minister to you as you listen.

Benediction

Prayer Ministry