

Please read the stories from Acts 3 and Acts 9. Read also Isaiah 35:1-10

What do you think about:

- A nun who can hardly hang onto her faith, who feels like she doesn't even know Jesus Christ because she suffers so with crippling rheumatoid arthritis?
- A man declared dead by EMTs after a terrible accident, who reportedly spent 90 minutes in heaven and came back to life to tell about it. Do you believe it?
- A woman diagnosed with breast cancer who receives chemotherapy and radiation, and then survives. Is this a healing?

What do you believe about healing in 2010?

Are these Bible stories, which were so wonderfully told by Grant, Katherine, and Mary, are they relevant in 2010? Those events are true – no doubt about that. The disciples and others testify to them; Jesus and His disciples were known to heal; no one doubts these stories. But some say healing like that does not happen today.

What do you think?

Are passages and stories like these relevant? Or are they some sort of mythology from a bygone era?

From beginning to end the Bible connects God and healing.

- If my people humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways, I will forgive their sin and **heal them** (2 Chron 7:14).
- In talking about His people God said, "Peace, peace, to the far and the near; and **I will heal them** (Isa 57:19).
- For **I will restore health** to you my people, and **your wounds I will heal**, says the LORD, because they have called you an outcast (Jer 30:17).

The man at the temple gate was an outcast because of his disability and he was unable to participate in worship life.

Healing is not always physical. Sometimes God heals something in the spirit:

- I will **heal your faithlessness** (Jer 3:22).
- I will **heal their disloyalty**; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them (Hos 14:4).

Healing is part of God's very nature.

God heals and so does Jesus in the New Testament:

- The power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal (Lk 5:17)
- God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power . . . he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him (Acts 10:38).

Jesus' healing power attested to His relationship with God. And, Jesus continues His healing through all of us:

- Jesus sent His followers out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal (Lk 9:2).

The question is *can we live up to it?* Do we have the courage and maturity in understanding this complex subject so that we can be instruments of healing?

We need to know God is all about healing. Listen to what the future will be like at the end times in the restored City of God, the New Jerusalem:

- On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit . . . and the leaves of the tree are for **the healing of the nations** (Rev 22:2).

So God doesn't say:

- Healing will stop with the Enlightenment and scientific development
- I will shift the power away from Myself to humans as they gain knowledge about medicine
- Miracles will not be necessary
- I validated Jesus then, but no longer need to do that.

Once a woman had a sick son and put him in the car and drove to a nearby church. She carried him into the pastor's office and asked the pastor to heal her son. The pastor said, "I can't guarantee it!" She said, "What good is the church then?" And she left.

So we have two dramatically different views – one view proclaims healing obsolete, and the other says healing should be magic on demand. What do you believe? Does healing happen now?

I want to attest that healing happens. I've experienced it and I credit faith in Jesus Christ, and the power of prayer. Healing gives glory to Jesus Christ, God's Son, and thus validates what God has done.

The people saw the crippled man standing and leaping, they saw Aeneas' get up when he had been paralyzed, and Tabitha raised from the dead. They were absolutely astonished. These were not everyday occurrences. Peter and John healed the man at the temple, but they did not heal every ill person that day. But in each case, when people heard or saw the healing, they believed in Jesus. So the primary purpose of healing is not the miracle itself, not the agents of the healing (in this case Peter and John), but to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

The power comes from Jesus, not you or me, and the glory belongs to Jesus.

Envision encountering someone who is ill, or sick, or who has a physical need. Do you avoid that person because you don't know what to do or say? Now envision Jesus meeting that person. What do you see Him doing? Jesus would reach out to them. When He embraces that person with love, see yourself doing the same thing. Kindness, love, and attention bring more healing power than you can imagine.

As Peter healed the man at the temple gates, he did not simply give a command and step back. He reached out. He assisted the man in his infirmity. You all are wonderful at doing that, and through your ministry to the sick here in this congregation, many people's spirits have been healed, as well as their bodies.

The lame man stood up, then leaped, jumped, walked, all the while praising God, as he clung to Peter and John. Before he had been marginalized; left out of the synagogue, made to beg, humiliated. These are the days before the ADA. Jesus insists that we not be that way. That's why it's so important for us to do everything we can to make our facilities accessible for those in need.

Healing occurs in all kinds of ways. The nun with rheumatoid arthritis, Briega McKenna, was miraculously healed, but she testifies that the healing of her faith was much more important. She has learned to pray for others to be healed too.

But what about healing? How would you pray for someone for healing?

Several years ago a pastor I know was serving as an interim at a church where a young mom had a possible brain tumor. She had lost her memory of her children. She could not remember their early years. She had lost her ability to speak.

When the pastor met her, he asked her if she believed in miracles. She said no. He didn't judge her, but simply asked if she would study the gospel of Mark with him. She agreed, communicating, of course, by writing, since she couldn't speak. Each day for two weeks he met with her to study. At the end of the study he asked her, "After reading Mark, do you believe in miracles?" She said, "Yes."

The pastor told her Jesus heals in three ways. Sometimes He heals now, sometimes He heals over time as you "go on your way," or sometimes He sustains you and stays with you in your sickness or handicap. So the woman decided she wanted to pray and ask God to heal her.

They invited two others, known as people of prayer, to join them; and everyone fasted for two days. Then they met at the church. They each shared with one another how God had helped them in difficult times. Following that they gathered around the woman, laid hands on her, anointed her, and said the Lord's Prayer.

She went home and exhausted, she fell into a deep sleep. She began dreaming of her children when they were babies. It was as if the Lord was restoring her memory. Then a voice called out to her. She awoke, but she saw no one. This happened a second time, only this time she answered the voice. She heard herself call out. The next morning she wrote a note to her husband at breakfast saying, "I have something to say." Then she spoke to him and said, "I love you."

Healings like this are once in a lifetime events. Not everyone is healed. But I believe that the pastor honored the woman when she said she didn't believe in healing. Then he respectfully helped her discover Jesus' healing power in the Scripture. He honored the Lord by recognizing that it's God's decision whether to heal or whether to walk with us and sustain us through

disability and disease. Sometimes God has a greater purpose which works through loss and disability.

This was a community event as several people in the church stood with this woman and sought healing. She said that because of their faithfulness, love, and compassion, she was healed mentally as well as physically.

So we are called not to waffle around about healing, not to opt out because we don't know anything about it; not to ignore the opportunity or to be afraid of stepping out in prayer. We are called to reach out and make a difference, and to pray and have faith and to take a risk, walking into people's lives with our hand in Jesus' hand. In that way we might experience a few miracles ourselves, as we allow His power and His glory to work through us.

AMEN