

“Healing and Wholeness”

Psalm 30:1-5, 11-12

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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We just heard a psalm that celebrates God's presence, God's healing power, God's activity in our lives. It uses phrases like:

*O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me....*

*Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning....*

*You have turned my mourning into dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,*

And there are many days when those things are exactly what we celebrate. There are many days when we feel God's healing power. There are many times when we are confident of God's interest, sometimes even intervention, in our lives. There are times when it is through our connection to God that we find joy and wholeness again.

But sometimes healing - our experience and understanding of it - sometimes it is not quite that simple. Sometimes how we understand God's healing power is better encapsulated in questions rather than answers. Sometimes we struggle to know where God is, especially when healing does not come with the cure we had hoped for. Sometimes we wonder where we have gone wrong and why God isn't showing up in the ways that we expect.

Healing is a complicated topic. And often when we read about healing in the Bible, it feels even more complicated whether that is because of confident proclamations with which we struggle, or differing understandings of things like how illnesses are perceived and the ancient assumptions that too often connect sin and illness.

Thankfully, ours is a faith that embraces questions.

And thankfully there are also stories of healing in the Bible that do remind us of some of the complexities. One of those, one that many of us may not have read, is found in the Hebrew Scriptures, in 2 Kings. And if you want to go read the entire story, it's found in 2 Kings, chapter 5. But let me just share a bit about it.

In 2 Kings we meet Namaan. Namaan is the commander of the army of Aram. He is a mighty warrior. *And* he has a skin disease that seems beyond curing.

Enter the servant girl of Namaan's wife. This young girl, an Israelite, proposes to Namaan that she might know someone who can help. She suggests that he go to Samaria, to the prophet Elisha.

Willing to try something new, Namaan goes through all the red tape...yes, they had red tape even back then...he goes through all the red tape to get a letter from his king to take to the king of Israel.

Eventually he gets to the door of the home of Elisha and once there he inquires. However, he is soon disappointed. Elisha never comes out to meet him. Rather a messenger simply gives an instruction for Namaan to go wash himself in the Jordan River seven times. And Namaan gets furious.

After all he is an important man and he has come all this way. The prophet won't even come out to meet him and then he is told to go into the dirty little river nearby.

It makes no sense to him. He should receive the respect of this prophet. And they have much more glorious waters back home. What in the world could make him think that this was the way he would receive a cure?

Eventually, it is pointed out to him that he has been given the opportunity to do something in a very simple way and he seems to want to make it difficult. So, finally he goes and he washes himself in the Jordan exactly as he is instructed. And low and behold, his condition is cured.

I like Namaan's story, maybe because I like a good skeptic. And I like stories that remind us that we have permission to ask questions, to challenge what we've been told, and also to try things that don't even make sense.

See, even though there are many things that I will claim with confidence, many things that I fully embrace...I also often find myself wondering about some of the things we credit to God and if we should do so. I find myself asking questions like: What is God's role in healing? and What is the power of prayer?

And because many things can be true at once...questions and confidence, wonderings and hope can live together on our journey of faith.

So, I wonder about the power of prayer and exactly how God does or does not intervene in the face of our hurts and pain and illness. *And* I believe that prayer is worthwhile. I believe that God wants us to call out, to reach out, to lean into the companionship God offers.

I pray and have prayed and will continue to pray with many of you in times when you were struggling: physically, mentally, emotionally, with grief, with frightening diagnoses. And I believe that the prayers we share matter. Meanwhile, I also have many questions. And that's okay.

Perhaps there are a couple of things we can learn from Namaan's story.

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One is that sometimes our healing comes in surprising ways. Sometimes it isn't how we expect it or by the means that we expect it, sometimes even not the kind of healing we expect.

We are also reminded that while God is a partner in our healing, people are partners in our healing as well. Trust me when I say, it would have never occurred to Namaan to go to his wife's servant girl to ask for healing advice. And yet because she was paying attention to him and offered what she could, she became essential to his healing.

And so we make this journey toward healing and wholeness together with God and with each other.

Sometimes it goes exactly as we hope, exactly as we expect. Sometimes the healing we receive is different than what we hoped for. But in the midst of it, here are things I am confident of:

- I believe that God is with us always. And God's presence matters. While that doesn't mean we are protected from the impact of risk, of decisions made by ourselves or others, of things like cancer rates and tragic accidents, still God's presence matters. God's companionship changes us and our experiences.
- I believe that God is never on the side of harm, but always wants what is best for us. Ours is not a God who taunts us with threats or who teaches us through pain, but rather one whose intention is always for our good, for our wholeness.
- I believe that healing is available. I believe that it comes in many ways and many forms, sometimes unexpectedly. And I believe we are invited to be open to discover the times when healing is offered beyond our expectations.
- I believe that as a community, we have a role to play in each other's healing and wholeness. I believe that community matters to our wellness. Cameron Trimble, who I often quote, recently shared a story of something she witnessed on her farm. One of her hens had been injured and was laying in the yard soaking up the sun when a hawk started circling overhead. Cameron writes, "Usually, the flock would scatter, each bird running for safety. But not this time. Instead, they ran toward the injured hen. One by one, they gathered around her, forming a living circle between their vulnerable sister and the danger above. No one taught them to do this. There was no meeting, no plan, and no debate about whether she deserved their help. They just knew they needed to keep her safe" (["The Circle Around the Wounded"](#) at Piloting Faith, July 20, 2026).

As a denomination we say, "We are a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world." That movement begins at the heart and intention of God and is expanded through our work.

Maybe we can't explain it...maybe we will never fully understand...but even in our questions we can celebrate alongside the psalmist that God is with us, a source of healing and wholeness, an ever-present companion. Amen.