

In the Way of Healing
Mark 9: 14-29
K Karpen, Sunday, October 8th , 2006
(with Walter Wang)

[Mark 9: 14-29 "In the Way of Healing," K Karpen, Sunday October 8, 2006]

The gospels are full of stories about Jesus healing people. The gospels are full of stories where someone who is suffering from a particular illness or malady or condition, or someone's relative or friend is suffering hears about this amazing healer from Nazareth.

The gospels are full of people who put themselves in the path Jesus, knowing that he can help. Jesus doesn't necessarily go out looking for people to heal. He is traveling around, teaching and gathering people to help him spread the new about God's love, justice, and saving power.

Jesus has plenty on his plate.

But word gets around that if you can just put yourself in the path of Jesus, you will get the healing you seek. And it's true! Jesus can't resist a chance to heal!

He may balk for a moment, as he does with the Syro-phoenician woman. He may ask the person whether he or she really wants to be healed, as he does with the man at Siloam.

But, when push comes to shove, if you put yourself in the way of the healer, if you put yourself in the way of healing, the healer will heal you.

Just thing general things to note about healing and I would like to invite Walter to come and share his experiences over the past year.

First, healing comes individually. Yes, we know that Jesus taught about the healing of social injustice, healing from violence, and healing from poverty and neglect.

Yes, he taught that these social maladies and social illnesses require healing. And, yes, we know because we know the end of the story, that Jesus gave his life for the healing and redemption of the whole world.

All the same, when Jesus heals in the Gospels, he heals one at a time, most of the time. That is how people become ill; one at a time. Being ill can be a marvelous and powerful experience of how much we depend on each other and how interconnected we are. But, being ill is also an experience of being terribly and utterly alone.

Second thing to notice is the role that faith plays in all of these stories. In many, Jesus himself seems almost incidental, and he makes that clear: Your faith has made you well.

We all have a certain amount of faith, or we couldn't get out of the house in the morning. You need a certain amount of confidence in life and in the Lord of life just to get through the day.

But, how much faith and faith about what is something we never know until we are facing a life-threatening illness or someone we love is.

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CS Lewis used to say, "You can never really know what you believe until you are placed in life and death situation. Of course, death is not such a problem for Christians. We have a lot of other problems, but maybe not that one.

When Dietrich Bonhoeffer was facing execution, he wrote this poem about death that he calls Station on the Road to Freedom:

Come , now, you great feast on the journey for freedom
Death, cast off my heavy chains take ways the walls of my body so we may see
clearly.
Freedom, how long we have looked for you dying, we see you revealed in God.

Maybe that is easy for you to say; maybe not.

But we who put our confidence in Christ know that there comes a moment when not just our freedom, but our healing comes through death.

Faith is inseparable from healing.

Third and finally, we are so good at getting in the way of healing! Like the disciples in today's story; like the father who wants to have confidence but can't quite find it.

Sometimes the best we can do is to get out of the way and let the healer heal.

"This kind can only come out through prayer."

I was so moved by Walter's experience of illness and healing, I invited him to share that story with all of us.