

“KNOWING JESUS: III - HEALER”

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Mark 2:1-12

As many of you know, last May I went on a cruise to Alaska with my mother, sister and brother-in-law. It was a fabulous trip with unbelievable sights. It was my very first cruise, and I have to tell you, I could get used to cruises real easily. You're pampered to the hilt. You can hardly lift a finger without somebody appearing by your side wanting to help you. Our cabin steward was named Yudi, and from the first day of the cruise, he called us by name and helped us in every way possible. If I would go back to the room without mom, he would say "Hi Karen, where's Momma?"

And our favorite waiter on the Lido deck was named Rudy. That's right - our favorites were Rudy and Yudi! Rudy knew before very long that Mom and I drank decaffeinated coffee, and that Mom drinks her's black and mine is with cream and sweet and low.

I mean, it's the Life of Riley! I'm saving up my pennies to do it again! Even if it's a cruise to nowhere!

There was only one thing that wasn't so sweet. And that's putting it mildly. Actually, it was pretty bad. We set sail from Seattle on a Saturday evening and by Sunday the wind had picked up, which meant the waves had picked up, and the ship started rocking and rolling. And I don't mean just a little. At first, it *was* just a little - all of a sudden you began to feel the ship moving. And then, it got worse. (According to the information on the TV in our cabin, we were experiencing gale force winds.)

So it started out a little bit rocky, but then it got real dicey. I mean, real dicey. Sometimes you would be walking and pick one foot up, and the ship would rock, and you'd almost fall over. After a while, we took to holding onto the walls to keep our balance - and trying to carry a tray with food and drink on it was no small task!

Now, at first, this rockin' and rollin' was amusing - after all, it was my first cruise. Then, it became work - I mean, you really had to be on your toes not to fall over. Finally, though, it became old. I remember sitting down to dinner one night and almost in tears, looking at Mom, Susan and Bob, saying "I'm about tired of

this.”

It was hard work. You couldn't make a move without thinking about getting from point A to point B without falling down. It made every hallway seem twice its length, and when you got into bed you had to position yourself so you wouldn't roll out. It wasn't funny or fun anymore. (Thankfully, during the night we sailed into calmer seas and all was right with the world again.)

Why did I tell you that story? Well, because today we're talking about sickness and health, and I want to suggest to you this morning that getting sick is somewhat like our experience on that ship. Getting sick is somewhat like life all of a sudden getting rocky, and the ground underneath your life becoming unsure, and all of your efforts go to dealing with it. When you get sick, suddenly everything else fades into the background, and the malady, the sickness, becomes the focus of your mind, your actions, your schedule.

Everyone in this room has been sick at one time or another in their life - most have just had illnesses that were temporary - they mess up life for a little while and then everything goes back to normal. But there are others, who have come up against serious, long-term illnesses that really set life to rockin'.

So all of us know to some extent or another what it's like when illness strikes. Anybody here with a back problem, knows what it's like when in a single moment you bend or twist a certain way, and bang, out goes your back and life changes dramatically for the next few days or weeks. Others here remember what it was like when you could just get up and go and do whatever you wanted whenever you wanted, but now illness has changed all that. And some others here in this room, know the utter turbulence of having a doctor give you a seriously bad report - *you* know about how life changes with those words.

I think it's safe for me to say that anyone who has experienced illness or suffering has one thing in common for sure - and it is a wish for health and wholeness in their lives.

Well, my friends, if that is you, you are not alone, for there is someone else who also wants health and wholeness for you - and His name is Jesus. Today, in this third sermon in the "Knowing Jesus" series - we're going to look more closely at Jesus the Healer, the bringer of health and wholeness to all of God's people.

If you were to read through the four Gospels, you would soon discover something about Jesus. In every single encounter Jesus had with people, he sought health and wholeness for them. That was his desire for all of God's people then and it's His desire for all of God's people now. Whether he was talking to someone about

money and possessions, or power and control, or forgiveness and anger, or discipleship and missions - in every encounter Jesus' goal was health and wholeness for that person. His desire was and is that all of God's children be healthy and whole inside and out.

And if you read through the four Gospels, you would doubtless discover that He had a special place in His heart and still does for those who are hurting because of illness. Over and over again, we read accounts of healings - the man born blind, the one fraught with demons, Jairus' daughter, Peter's mother-in-law, the woman and man in this morning's Gospel lessons - the list goes on and on. Each one of them is different - each one of them is healed in a different way - but the one thing they have in common is that Jesus desired for them to be healthy and whole.

Sometimes they came to Jesus on their own accord seeking healing, as did the woman we heard about in the lesson from Luke. She had been suffering for years on end, and in desperation, for so many had failed to help her, she struggled through a crowd to just touch the hem of the Master's robe. She came, asking for help for herself, praying for herself, if you will. She literally threw herself at Jesus' feet and sought His healing for her out-of-control suffering.

But sometimes people were brought to Jesus by others. Such was the case of the paralyzed man whose friends fought against all the odds to get him to Jesus that he might be healed. When they couldn't get to Jesus one way, they found another and another. Sometimes it's others - friends, family, church members - who seek healing for those who are suffering.

Either way - however it happened - in both of those cases, healing occurred. Jesus healed both the woman who had suffered for years, and the paralyzed man. It shouldn't surprise us, because (and what I'm about to say may surprise you) when we pray to Jesus for healing, it always happens - always! Curing may not happen, but healing always happens!

Frederick Buechner, a wonderful Christian writer, once said, "If God doesn't seem to be giving you what you ask, maybe he's giving you something else." Healing may not look the way you think it will, but with Jesus, healing always happens.

I remember reading a line from a man named Gordon McKeenam once in which he said this: "My own aspiration is to die at the age of 95 in perfect health, not cured, but healed." (Gary Smith, "Shalem, Shalom: A Sermon on Healing")

Healing always happens when we go to the Lord for ourselves or for others. We dare not forget that. So today, on this day when we know Jesus as healer, I

want to invite us to pray for those who are hurting. Many in our church family and many others whom we know and love are hurting today. Some have short-term illnesses, and others are in the fight of their lives. Some are grieving the loss of someone they love, others are watching someone they love suffer. Some are in pain that's come on suddenly and hopefully, will fade away in the coming days - others are learning to live with chronic pain. So many in our church family and friends are hurting today and need our prayers.

So I invite you in a few moments to come to the chancel rail and bring them to Jesus for healing. Come and pray for yourself or someone else who needs to feel the touch of Jesus the Healer. Come and pray for exactly what he or she needs.

So now as we sing the hymn "Lord God Almighty" I invite anyone who wishes to, to come to the rail and pray for healing for anyone who is hurting this day. If the rail fills up, which it probably will, simply stand behind those who are kneeling, until space becomes available. We'll stay here in prayer as long as we need to, and we'll sing as long as we need to. Then Judy will offer the pastoral prayer and we'll conclude by saying the Lord's prayer together.

My dear friends, it is Jesus' desire that all of God's children be healthy and whole. Come now and prayer for those who are hurting in any way that they might be healed this very day.