

Sermon: Healing in Jesus' Name**Scripture: Matthew 11:1-6****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: March 8, 2026**

What this passage from the Gospel of Matthew makes clear is how central to Jesus his healing ministry was. Jesus was a healer. Someone described that his healing activities are so prominent in the Gospels that Jesus is either on his way to heal someone, coming from healing someone or in the midst of healing someone. Healing was so front and center that you could make the point that it was the point of it all.

John in jail asks his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the one who is to come. John was not so sure, for whatever reason and so he sends his disciples to ask and Jesus' response is telling. He says "Go tell John what you hear and what you see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." That he heals, in Jesus' mind, is evidence that he is of God, the Messiah come to save.

Jesus, we say, revealed God to us and Jesus was regularly healing the people around him, so we see God is a God that wants us healed. Our sickness, our brokenness, our sinfulness, is what God wants to save us from, heal us from. Sin, sickness and death run counter to God's purposes for our flourishing, and that's why in Jesus' brief time among us as a singular human being, he spent so much of it using his great power to heal others. And what he passed onto his disciples and apostles and the church after, was also an expectation that they too would manifest God's power of healing for others. The good news is that God loves us here and now and

wants our best, our health, our healing, and for us to live lives of abundance.

Now healing power can happen through the work of nurses and doctors, through medicine and through the work of therapists for sure and thank God for all those good people and the good work they do. But that healing can also happen through caring human touch and healing prayer. And in fact over the ages Christians have believed that simply residing in the name of Jesus Christ and in his Spirit is profound healing power. So when we pray for one another and when we lay our hands on one another in prayer as the Christian faithful have done across the centuries people are healed. Are people always healed by doing that? No. Are people ever healed by doing that? Yes. Ask nurses, doctors and therapists if people are always healed by what they do. No, of course not. Are they ever healed? Yes, of course they are. Should the negative examples keep us from going to the doctors or going to God in healing prayer? No, it shouldn't.

So we have this incredibly beautiful resource available to us called "one another" or "community". And we have this incredibly beautiful example in Jesus Christ the Healer whose Spirit, we are told and many of us experience, as alive and well today. And if Jesus in his earthly life was mainly a healer then his Spirit is a Healing Spirit and can be accessed towards our healing and others too. And that's what we are doing this morning. Pulling upon the strong name and Spirit of Jesus to pray for healing for ourselves and one another.

It could seem selfish that we are doing this while a war is raging on by our country and making a mess of our world elsewhere. But it's not. While they are engaged in acts of destruction and death we are engaged in an act of healing. And the healing that happens here doesn't dead end here

but is passed on and multiplied. God loves us and wants us healed and wants us to be healers, whether you are a doctor, a nurse, a therapist, a money manager, lawyer or simply someone who humbly prays for others> God loves us, wants our healing and invites us to be healers.

So this is what we are going to do this morning. We have a Healing Ministry here at First Congregational Church called the Health and Wellness Ministry and we are inviting you - if you so choose - to have a brief laying-on-of-hands healing prayer after you light your candles. What I'd like to invite you to think about, pray about, right now for a moment is this - what are the areas in your life that could use a healing touch. It could be a physical sickness or hurt: significant like a broken bone or a disease or an old injury within you or small, like a headache, a cold, or soreness in your muscles. Nothing is too great or too small not to bring to God in prayer. God loves you as a parent loves a child and delights in our coming to Him regardless of the reason. So a physical bodily sickness or hurt we could pray for at one of these stations.

But we could also pray for healing of an emotional sickness or hurt - I am brokenhearted over this situation or that situation. I've been struggling with feeling down and depressed. I am anxious and I don't know why. Think of the kind of things you might bring to a therapist, certain dynamics that are problematic in your life, certain hurts from your childhood that need to be healed, certain relationships that are painful right now. You can bring those and we can pray over you for the healing of them. These are brief encounters here so you can't go into details, but you can share enough about the situation and we can pray over you for emotional healing.

And then the other thing we can pray over is something that Jesus also did a lot of and that is pray for inner healing with regard to forgiveness.

A significant way that our *spirits* can become sick as distinct from our bodies and emotions - though not unrelated - is that we can get caught in bitterness and resentments. The prevalence of how and the myriad ways in which we can get caught there and the damage that can be done as a result is why forgiveness was so often what Jesus was working on in people. Sometimes his healing involved very directly forgiveness of sins as well - remember the man on the stretcher - your sins are forgiven, get up and walk. So when we think of healing prayer with Jesus at the center we can also bring to mind ways that we are stuck in illness of the spirit, bitterness and resentment. You know what Alcoholics Anonymous calls the number one offender in the life of an alcoholic? Resentment. They say it destroys alcoholics more than anything else and is a major obstacle to the spiritual life. Resentment, holding a grudge, being bitter, refusing forgiveness is a sickness of spirit that can ruin us if we are not careful. So that's another thing that you can bring to a healing station. Again, feel free to be as specific or vague as necessary but if you are needing to forgive someone and harboring anger for them in your spirit, that can be something to be prayed over and healed.

So there you go three ways that you might want to seek healing this morning - for bodily sickness, emotional sickness, or a sickness of the spirit. I think you'll find that the laying-on-of-hands prayer is a very sweet experience if you've not experienced it before - that it will be like sweet honey to your soul and healing to your bones as the proverb says.

God loves you, wants your healing, and desires the very best for you, in Jesus name, amen.