

As I ponder what I'm going to say for each Sunday morning, I sit at my desk at home, gazing out the window that overlooks my garden and bird feeder. Sometimes I see animals playing in my yard, or I look in the distance and see ducks swimming on the pond. Sometimes these views serve as a distraction from coming up with a sermon, but more times than not, I find myself giving thanks for seeing the beauty of God's creation.

So, when I came to this week's scripture about the two men who could *not* see, I realized I don't know what that experience is like. I'm so used to my vision that I take it for granted, but this story invites us to live in the shoes of these two men, to sense their frustration at not being able to see.

When they approached Jesus, crying out for mercy, he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to heal you?" When they replied yes, he touched their eyes and said, "It will happen for you just as you have believed" (CEB), or as another translation says, "Because of your faith, you will be healed" (CEV). And then they could see! Just like that!

I have mixed emotions about this response. On the one hand, I'm delighted that they could see once again, but on the other, it almost sounds as though they were healed due to their faith or because they believed. That may lead some to wonder, *What about those who are not healed? Does that mean they did not have faith, or they didn't believe enough?*

A similar question arose this past week in our virtual Soup 'n Soul group as we reflected on last week's story of the centurion who approached Jesus for the healing of his servant. One person noted that the centurion had so much faith that he didn't even need Jesus to come to his house to heal the servant—he offered his request to Jesus and trusted that healing would be done from a distance.

One person then commented, "His faith humbles me. I don't trust or pray as intently for the healing of others as he did. Maybe I just don't do enough." Another person replied, "Yeah, and when I lost my loved one last year, I wondered if I had done enough."

The stories in the Bible about healing leave us with questions. We long for the same kind of healing, and yet, we realize healing does not always seem to happen in the way we think it should. Before we have much time

2

to think about these two men who were blind but could now see, Jesus encounters a person who could not speak. As a way of explaining his situation, the narrator explains that the man was afflicted with a demon or an evil spirit. Rather than a demon, today we might explain this situation as a mental illness, when some aspect of our mental abilities is compromised. Families living with members who are mentally ill may long for healing for their loved one, and this story about Jesus casting out a demon so the man could talk may seem uncomfortable. Once again, we may ask, why can't all be healed in such a way?

Although belief and prayer can be an important part of the healing process, it's not up to us to make healing happen. Sometimes we do not see the healing we want, and our actions cannot make the healing occur. Or, it may be that healing does occur, but we can't see it now, for we can't see the kind of healing that occurs after our death. If we trust that we continue to exist beyond our life on this earth, then healing can happen even if we don't see it now. Jesus' work offered us a glimpse of

God's realm, a place where healing does occur, a healing that someday we will all be able to see.

When we don't see healing, it's not because we haven't prayed enough or believed enough, it's just that we can't see it right now. We often need one another to help us see what God is doing, as was the case with

two elderly men, roommates in a nursing home. One had recently gone blind and was living in quiet despair. He felt that life held little for him. He wanted only to die.

His roommate could see just fine, but he had trouble getting around. He rarely left his bed, which was next to the window of their room.

Neither one could remember how it happened, but one day the man who could see began describing to his roommate what was going on in the world outside their window. He told him of the mail carrier making his rounds; of neighbors walking their dogs; of the teenage boy and girl who passed the window every day after school — who first held hands, then embraced, then had an argument, then reconciled once again.

As the days went on, the blind man came to live for these updates from the outside world. His friend seemed to take such joy in it and had a real gift for describing what everything looked like.

Then one day his friend — who was much sicker than he had imagined — died. A new patient was wheeled in.

The blind man asked his new roommate if he would let him know what was happening outside the window.

“I’d be glad to,” said the roommate, “but I don’t know how I could do that. There’s nothing outside our window but a solid brick wall.”

The blind man was bewildered for a moment. He felt betrayed by his former friend. Had he been playing him for a fool? But then he realized, in a flash, what a precious gift his friend had given. He had spun, out of nothing but the stuff of his imagination, an entire world. He had dreamt up the mail carrier, and the neighbors, and the pair of teenage lovers — and he’d made those characters as real as if they’d lived outside that window, every day.

In that moment of revelation, the man realized there are things worse than having no sight. It is far worse to have no imagination, no inner vision.<sup>1</sup>

You and I can help provide that inner vision, that ability to imagine a world where illness is no longer an obstacle.

Imagine a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their health or mental abilities.

Imagine a world where those with mental illness are welcomed and included.

Imagine a world where people gather around to listen to the wisdom of those who can no longer see with their eyes, but can still feel with their hearts and remember with their minds.

Imagine a world where those who become ill are offered love and care and healing, regardless of their ability to afford health insurance.

Imagine a world where we search for healing for one another as a Beachcomber searches for beach glass, and when finding it, listens to the story of its beginning; hears its pain; and welcomes it with open arms.

When you have begun to imagine such a world, you have caught a glimpse of God’s realm, a place where all are welcome, a place where healing alleviates all our pain and suffering.

And that’s a healing worth believing.

---

<sup>1</sup> HomileticsOnline.com