

**Healing. God Is Waiting to Be Invited.**  
**Sunday, February 5, 2023, 10:00 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena**  
**The Rev. Alfredo Feregrino**

There is a well-known saying in Mexico that my mom always told us whenever we injured ourselves or whenever we were sick. She will put her hand on us and she would tell us that everything would be fine and that we eventually will heal.

She said,

***“Sana, sana colita de rana, si no sanas hoy, sanarás mañana”***

*Heal, heal, little frog tail, if you don't heal today you'll heal the next day.*

I really do not know what is the meaning of the frog tail in this phrase, but I guess it rhymes.

It was always with a touch, that we receive assurance that we will be ok. There was always hope that everything will be fine.

I personally do not know anyone who does not want to be well or healthy.

I personally do not know anyone who does not want their lives filled with purpose, meaning and happiness.

I personally do not know anyone who wants to suffer or be sick.

This is never what we want for ourselves, right?

This is not what God wants for us. God does not want us to suffer or to be sick.

God wants us to have life, and life in abundance, as the sacred scriptures remind us.

But many times we cannot control what happens around us.

And what it is interesting is that many times, we cannot control what happens within our spirit, mind or bodies, right?

And then when we cannot control what is happening around us or within us, we can be dragged into thinking that we are unable to transform or change our selves or our surroundings.

And we may be tempted to admit that nothing can be done.

Yes, the loss of control, the uncertainty is one of the mysteries of life perhaps...and many times they can paralyze us and blind us from seeing any new possibilities, and they can make us lose hope and faith in ourselves.

In the gospel that we heard today, what we see is the exact opposite of this.

As Jesus was eating at the house of Matthew the tax collector, a leader of the synagogue knelt before Jesus begging him to visit his daughter asking him: “ *My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live*”

*(The name of this leader is Jairus as the same miracle is recounted in the Gospel of Mark.)*

We can only imagine the despair of this man knowing that he is not in control, his daughter just died, and he desperately asks for help, he does not know whom else to turn to, except to the one known in the region of Galilee as the miracle worker. The one known for casting out demons and curing all who were sick.

Yes, his daughter is already dead but he is not hopeless. He knows deep in his gut that his daughter will live again.

And Jesus responds by getting up and following the leader of the synagogue to his home.

The gospel tells us that on their way, suddenly a woman with no name appears, she has suffered for twelve years with a flow of blood, implying a menstrual disorder and with the conviction that she will be healed, she comes up behind Jesus and touches the fringe on his clothing.

What does she have to lose? Nothing, absolutely nothing. She has already lost so much.

In the Palestine of the first century, a woman with a condition like this, without a doubt, would have been a social outcast. Her condition made her ritually unclean and probably she would have had to live her days in isolation, separated from her family and her village.

Yes, hidden in this particular story, is not only the reality of illness but also the reality of social alienation and isolation, which is devastating for any human being.

Just like the leader of the synagogue, this woman has hope, she knows deep in her gut that she is going to be healed. That she can change the outcome of her misfortune.

And she has the courage and the desire to reach out.

And what was Jesus' response after being touched?

He was not surprised at all, and without hesitation he says to her:

*Daughter, Your faith has healed you!*

And at that moment she was healed, and the miracle was made manifest.

Albert Nolan a South African theologian points out in his book "Jesus Before Christianity", that over and over again Jesus said to the persons who had been cured:

*"Your faith has healed you"*

which according to him, lifts Jesus out of any of the contemporary categories of physician, exorcist or wonder-worker.

Basically, what Albert Nolan is telling us is that Jesus is not the one who has healed the sick person.

Just think about it for a moment.

Jesus never said: *"I healed you"*

Jesus is not even saying, at least not explicitly that the person was healed by God.

*"Your faith has healed you"* he says... wow

In other words, there were no magical formulas or magic wands.

This kind of healing was a manifestation of the power of faith. Yes, faith for Jesus is an almighty power, a power that can achieve the impossible.

But, we have to be really careful here. Because many times we assume that just having faith is all we need. We assume that simply believing is all we need, but there is more.

And there are many definitions of the word faith and there are many ways to interpret what it means to have faith.

And for me my preferred interpretation is that

**Faith is a gift received only in conversation with the Holy...**

As I learned with William Countryman an Episcopalian priest in his book "Living on the Border of The Holy". Faith is just a gift.

But the word in Greek that the gospel writer is using here for faith is *pisteúō* (verb)/*pístis* (noun), which is also translated as trust.

*(Thygater, hé pistis sou sesóken).*

And trust is the assured reliance in someone or something.

Jesus was able to do the things he did because he put complete trust in God.

Throughout the gospels, miracles are not intended to be a reward for people's faith as some modern "faith healers" claim.

The Gospel does not say "only if you believe well enough, you will have miracles or if you don't have miracles, it is because you do not have enough faith"

And we need to be careful because this can be used to induce guilt. And this is not the purpose of the gospel.

In this gospel, we can see in the example of the leader of the synagogue that sometimes, the faith, or the trust of others produces the healing, instead of the one being healed. This is a suggestion that faith is not always necessarily a precondition for receiving healing.

You do not have to have faith all by yourself, healing is also a group activity. It is the embrace of a parent, it is the prayer of your loved ones and your community.

Faith in this case is a gift in conversation with the Holy, that receives the act of God as its response.

But to receive this act of God there is a requirement from you... a pre-requisite

You need to desire it. You need to want it

Just few verses ahead of this gospel in the same chapter, two blind men following Jesus were crying loudly: *Have mercy on us, Jesus*. In a way saying, Jesus ...we want to be healed.

*And Jesus asked them, if they believe that he was able to do this? and they said Yes... then Jesus touched their eyes and said: "According to your faith, let it be done to you." (Matt 9:27)*

Yes, to receive this act of God you need to want it, as Richard Rohr remind us.

God does not come unwanted. God does not come in any situation uninvited.

God is always present yes, but if you do not expect, or want to be healed or desire it, you can not let God in. You need to want to open the door to God.

So, I wonder, what do you need healing from?

Do you need healing from anger, fear, resentment, betrayal?

I wonder, what do you need healing from?

From violence in or communities, from the forces that corrupt and destroy, what God has created?

I wonder, what do you need healing from?

From suffering in your spirit, from suffering in your mind, from suffering in your body.

If you are suffering, do you have the desire to be healed?

Do you have the desire to be whole?

Trust and believe that healing is possible. For you, for your love ones, for your communities.

God is waiting to be invited. God is waiting for you to open the door.

God is waiting for you to offer your burdens and your afflictions.

Jesus says: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and I will give you rest”* (Matt 11:28-30)

When I was working as a chaplain, at Swedish and at Seattle Children Hospital, I always had this passage with me and I prayed with it more than once a day.

There is a story of a patient,

He was a man of deep faith, who was diagnosed with a terminal disease. He and his wife prayed that he might be healed. Many months later in the last debilitating stages of the disease, he said to all, that his prayers had been answered.

And he said with all honesty: *“I have been healed. Yes, I have been healed... not of my terminal disease but I have been healed of my fear”*.

Yes, healing comes to us in many forms and ways that we do not expect.

So, trust in a new world of possibilities.

Trust that good things will happen, things far beyond your imagination or prediction.

If you open the door to God, if you desire it, if you want it, healing will come to you.

Then Jesus can say to you, to us, that our faith, our trust, our desire to be well has healed us.

**AMEN!!!**

***A note from the preacher:*** *Because sermons are meant to be preached and therefore prepared with emphasis on verbal presentation (i.e., are written for the ear), the written accounts occasionally deviate from proper and generally accepted principles of grammar and punctuation. Most often, these deviations are not mistakes per se, but are indicative of an attempt to aid the listener in the delivery of the sermon.*