

2021 02 17 – Love Heals

Mark 1:29-39 (The Inclusive Bible)

Recently I have been exchanging emails with a friend that I have known for over twenty-five years. She lives in Ontario and we have been trying to find a time to catch up via Zoom. Since moving to Saskatchewan, I have seen my friend (I'm going to call her Belle) very infrequently. But eleven years ago, I was able to attend her fiftieth birthday party. For that event, Belle brought together all the people who had been a part of her life over the past decade so we could meet each other and celebrate.

You see, her forties had been an incredibly important decade in Belle's life. She had gone through a very difficult healing process. Belle had been healing from the trauma of childhood abuse. She had allowed me to be a part of her journey because Belle knew that I had also traveled that path. It was a gift for me to be able to share my compassion and my faith with Belle as she struggled to let go of the pain of her childhood trauma.

We all have stories of healing. Many of us have struggled with physical illnesses: cancer, heart attacks, strokes, broken bones, and the list goes on. Some of us have struggled with mental illness: schizophrenia, addiction, depression or manic episodes. Others have dealt with the trauma that comes from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. And for many, healing has been needed because of the inevitable pain of loss.

Today's scripture is also about healing. It begins with Jesus and his four new disciples, entering the home of Simon and Andrew in the seaside town of Capernaum. There the brothers find Simon's mother-in-law lying ill with fever, and immediately they tell Jesus about her. The scripture tells us that, "Jesus went over to her, took her by the hand and helped her up, and the fever left her." Simon's mother-in-law was healed.

Obviously, word of the healing got around because, that evening the whole town arrived at the disciples' home. The townspeople crowded the door, watching in anticipation and wonder as all those who were ill were brought to Jesus to be healed. According to scripture, "Jesus healed many who were sick with different diseases and cast out many demons." Jesus had the spiritual gift of healing and he shared it with the inhabitants of Capernaum that evening.

And the next morning, Jesus rose early and went off to a lonely place in the desert to pray. You see, Jesus knew that the power to heal didn't come from him alone. True spiritual healing happens only when the healer is connected to the power of Love, God's Love, the Divine Energy of the Universe. When Jesus went off to a lonely place to pray, he was taking the time he needed to re-connect, to re-energize and to heal his own body, mind, and soul.

Jesus had a wonderful gift, but I wonder what would have happened to Simon's mother-in-law if his disciples hadn't brought their rabbi to their home that day? I wonder what would have happened to all the others who were healed that evening if no one had brought them to Jesus? The reality is that Jesus did not

heal those people on his own.

There are always multiple people involved in any healing process. Some will have special training like doctors, nurses, therapists, clergy and counsellors. Others will be part of a support network: family, friends, and neighbours. And still others will be strangers that appear for a moment along the way.

Think of the people who have been there for you when you have been physically, mentally or spiritually ill. Think about the ones who have shared their skills and training, the ones who have pointed you in the right direction, the ones who supported you when you were struggling, the ones who listened when you needed to vent, and the ones who entertained you when you needed to forget. There were at least twenty people at my friend Belle's party, how many would you invite to yours?

True healing involves all parts of our being. It involves our mind, our body and our soul. Put another way, true healing is Divine Love restoring us to who we really are, to who we were meant to be. My friend Belle has recently found her true calling as grandmother. Thanks to her healing process, she is able to be there for her daughter, son-in-law and her two young grandchildren during this pandemic. In the scripture reading, Simon's mother-in-law was healed and immediately knew what she was meant to be, and she went about her work.

When Jesus' disciples found him in the desert, Jesus said, "Let us move on to the neighbouring villages so that I may proclaim the Good News there also. That

is what I have come to do.” Jesus knew who he was and what he was called to do and be. He also knew that the Good News was not just words, but also action. Jesus was called to preach the Good News, to teach of God’s Love and to heal, to make people whole again. The coming of God’s reign of peace and justice would happen one person at a time.

No matter who we are meant to be, our calling will one day connect us to someone who needs our help. I was a part of Belle’s journey and many people have been a part of mine. You can also be a healing presence in the lives of the people in your life.

Of course, the strength, the power that we are drawing on is not really our own. Like Jesus, we are able to assist in healing others only because we are able to connect with the strength and the power of God’s Loving Spirit within us. And we do that through spiritual practices such as: prayer, meditation, singing, and spending time in nature.

The amazing thing is that we don’t have to be totally healed ourselves before we can take part in someone else’s healing process. There’s a book by Henri Nouwen called “The Wounded Healer.” In it he explains that our own woundedness can actually be a source of strength and wisdom when we reach out to help others. <https://henrinouwen.org/meditation/the-wounded-healer/>

This week I finally found the time to review our annual report and add my own reflections on the past year. As I read about the activities of each committee and

working group in our church, I was in awe of the many ways that our congregation impacts the lives of others. Organizations like the church can also be conduits of the spirit. Like individuals, we, as a community, have the ability to use God's love to heal others.

And, like individuals, the church is also on its own healing journey. There may be relationships that need to be mended, energy that needs to be restored, a building that needs to be repaired or a vision that needs to be reworked. But even in the midst of our own healing journey, First United Church has the ability to reach out and help others.

Through God's Love we can all be healed and we can all become healers.

So be it. Amen.