

THE GOOD NEWS# 14 Healer of Our Every Ill

Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.

--Matthew 6:34 (NRSV)

"My father was in the hospital, critically ill. My husband had just lost his job. My thoughts were consumed with present and future loss. I was brokenhearted when I imagined life without my father and when I thought of my children losing their grandfather. My husband was devastated by the loss of his job, and we feared loss of our income. I wanted to wake up every morning filled with thanksgiving for a new day, but instead I found myself filled with dread and sadness. Not only was I anxious about tomorrow; I was worried about today as well. How could I focus on God's gift of today when I didn't like what today offered?"

Susan wrote these words as she remembered her fear and anxiety. We too have all had times when we are lost and need God's healing and direction..

Sometimes we find ourselves in frightening circumstances. Jesus' words quoted above encourage us not to wish our circumstances away by dreaming about a future time or to make matters worse by worrying about what else might go wrong. Instead, Jesus says that we are to seek the Lord even in the midst of crisis. When we are in sad or overwhelming situations, **God promises to be with us**. By focusing on today, we discover that **God provides the strength and courage we need**. We don't have to worry about tomorrow because God will meet us there when tomorrow comes.

Our scripture for today is

MARK 1:21-28 READ *****

Here, we see Jesus as the Great Healer.-- a teacher with extraordinary powers.. The scribes & teachers of the day gathered to share their scholarship and knowledge.. Mark presents Jesus as one who teaches with the authority of God and the backing of his deeds. Jesus demonstrated a divine authority that had not been seen before and was perceived as a threat to the scribes. Jesus' treatment of the ill was amazing. His actions disrupted social norms. Social, political, and religious authorities came to view Jesus as a blasphemer and revolutionary. They were afraid of his powers.

The exorcism seems of secondary importance in this story. Jesus has the divine authority to drive out the unclean spirit living in the person he encountered in the synagogue – whatever the unclean spirit is. The healing amazed the people who saw what happened, but they were more amazed by the authority with which Jesus acted.

This week I re-read the insightful little book by Harold Kushner, **“When Bad Things Happen to Good People”**. He spends a great deal of time talking about healing—even after the most traumatic of circumstances, we can find healing. **“With God all things are possible”**. (Mt. 19:23-26)

Have you ever felt that your life was out of your control? You don't know how it is going to turn out!?? Probably at some time in your life you have had this frightening feeling. O God, how will this turn out. Perhaps you've had cancer --or someone very dear to you has? My Dad died of colon cancer. So I have experienced that kind of helplessness. And I have lost dear friends. Heart-wrenching experiences. Heart disease & its complications is another concern for us—especially in North America—where our food is so rich & our stress level is so high—we keep such a fast paced lifestyle—those 2 ---cancer & heart disease are the 2 most common concerns for us. And of course, there are many other concerns—troubles. The famous gospel hymn says: " Lord, nobody knows the trouble I've seen". When we really think about it , there is so much that is out of our hands—in this sense, we are like refugees—at the mercy of others, their expertise--or perhaps their simple acts of kindness. Jesus says, we are brothers & sisters & **we are to care for each other**. As Christians—it's part of the deal.

Healing—we long for healing—both physical & spiritual. It comes from God's power & love and our relationship with one another & with God, the Source of life. As humans we know that there are limits to physical healing—it is the human condition—life, death--& life again in God's realm.—that is the promise of Jesus. **Spiritual healing though-- has no limits.** Spiritual healing is a sure thing. "With God all things are possible"—the promise of Jesus to us. (I've seen it—been a witness—the power of God's healing—even amidst horrific conditions) Love & life are more powerful than death, war & revenge. That's gospel—**the good news.**

The theme this week comes from the beautiful hymn by Marty Haugen, "Healer of our every ill". There is an interesting story that goes with the composing of this very moving hymn/prayer.

**"Healer of our every ill,
Light of each tomorrow,
Give us peace beyond our fear,
And hope beyond our sorrow." (VU 619)**

Marty Haugen wrote this "meditative song" during the winter of 1985-86. His family were staying at a retreat centre in Washington State. On January 28, 1986, the space shuttle Challenger crashed shortly after takeoff. Haugen writes: "In addition to the loss of 7 astronauts, (one of whom was the school teacher Christa McAuliffe), this crash was a symbolic loss for all of America. At the retreat in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State, we held an evening service together and "Healer of Our Every Ill" was written as an expression for our community to grieve together."

Haugen uses the text of this hymn as a prayer for healing, not only of the body, but also of the mind and spirit. The refrain, "**Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow,**" is a powerful prayer and helps us express thoughts we find difficult to put into words. This hymn is also about joy, as shown in verse 2 with the words, "**your grace is still unfolding**". Always know, God gives us hope for a new tomorrow.

In vs. 3, he writes, "**Give us strength to love each other**". God urges us, even in times of sorrow and fear, to show love and kindness to our sisters and brothers in Christ.

The last verse sums it up: "Teach us all your way of healing. **Spirit of compassion, fill each heart.**"

Our Prayer: In you, O God, we find healing and comfort. Your love for us is constant and steadfast. You give us strength, patience and hope to renew and empower our spirits for this awesome journey of life. AMEN!

A footnote: Marty Haugen continues to play the organ and write liturgies for the Lutheran church where he & his family attend in Minneapolis.

For the Merry Heart:

Two things to make your day go better:

1. Do not watch the news.
2. Stay off the bathroom scales

Have a great week!

Stay safe & Be at peace.

Shalom, Annalee