

Pray More Healing Retreat 2020 - Transcript

The Lord Is Our Healer

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Hi, Hello friends, I'm Dr. Mary Healy, and I'm so glad you've joined me for this online healing retreat. Welcome, let's pray. *In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Heavenly Father, how great is Your goodness, beyond anything we could think or imagine. Truly you are the God who heals and you sent your beloved son Jesus to die for us and rise from the dead so that we could be reconciled to You and be healed of sin and all the consequences of sin. And, we pray Father, that through this retreat we would come to a deeper understanding and experience of your mighty power to heal, so that we can also be your instruments of healing to others. And, we ask all this through Christ, our Lord, Amen, Mary, star of evangelization, pray for us. In the name of the Father and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

Well, it's a good time to talk about healing because you now belong to a generation that has lived through a pandemic. And, through the global lockdown that resulted unprecedented in history; and, all of the other economic and social reverberations of that pandemic, which are still unfolding. And, even before the events of 2020, we were already living in a culture of tremendous woundedness, of tremendous need for healing. We are surrounded by people who are deeply wounded by the breakdown of the family, by a culture of narcissism, materialism, and consumerism, by sexual exploitation and promiscuity, besides other traumas like, war and violent religious persecution, racism, violence in cities. And, so many people are therefore deeply in need of healing, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

So, this is a perfect time to rediscover what scripture reveals about God's power to heal, and the fact that Jesus, our Lord loves to heal. And, he does heal today just as he did in Galilee 2000 years ago. There's a beautiful scripture verse that I had never really noticed until recently. It's in the book of Exodus and it's after God leads his people out of slavery across the red sea, into the wilderness, and He then reveals something new about Himself. He gives himself a new name. It's in Exodus 15, verse 26. God says, **"I am the Lord, your healer."** God is saying you cannot separate healing from who I am. It belongs to my very nature to heal. It's my personality, It's my character, to bring my people whom I created to the fullness of life I always intended for them. **"I am the Lord, your healer."**

Pray More Healing Retreat 2020 - Transcript

Well, God gave that revelation of himself, but the people of Israel didn't always experience that healing nature of God, because so often they rebelled against Him, they turned away from Him, they worshiped false gods, they didn't trust in Him. Maybe something we're familiar with too. But, God didn't give up on them. He sent them the prophets who promised that one day a messiah would come, who would save them from everything that keeps them from the fullness of life. And, the way he would be known is by his healings. And so Isaiah, for example, prophesies in Isaiah 35, "***Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened. And the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.***"

So, God gave all of these promises through the prophets. And then, what happened when Jesus came? Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan river. He was filled in his human nature with the Holy Spirit who descended upon him in the form of a dove. And, shortly after that, he went into the synagogue of Nazareth and he gave his very first sermon, which sums up his whole mission. And, he read from the prophet Isaiah, and he chose one of those prophecies about the coming messiah. And he read, "***The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me. He has sent me to proclaim good news to the poor, to open the eyes of the blind, to let the oppressed go free. And, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.***" Jesus was saying, "***I am the Lord, your healer. I am the messiah promised by God who has come to save you from everything that keeps you from the fullness of life, God intended for you.***"

Well, he said that in his very first sermon, and then he proceeded to do it. And, from that point on a huge proportion of the gospels is devoted to Jesus healings, healing the sick, the blind, the deaf, the demonized and even the dead, raising them up. And again, and again, the gospels give us summaries of what Jesus was doing like this. He went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

So, the gospels are telling us Jesus's healings cannot be separated from his preaching of the good news of the kingdom. And, why is that? Because, the healings confirm and verify that the good news is really true. They convince the hearts of people who are so weighed down and oppressed by all the consequences of sin, and living in this fallen world. They convince them that the good news is really true. Jesus really has come to save us from sin and Satan, and death. He really is victorious. And, God really has boundless compassion for all of those who are suffering, even when they're suffering partly because of their own sin.

Pray More Healing Retreat 2020 - Transcript

Pope Benedict said something beautiful in his book, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said, "Healing is an essential dimension of the mission of the apostles and of Christian faith in general. Christianity is a therapeutic religion. It's a religion of healing. When understood at a sufficiently deep level." He said, "Healing expresses the entire content of redemption." In fact, the Greek word for heal, "sozo," is actually, it can be translated both heal and save. Salvation is God's work of healing. Jesus came ultimately to heal the deepest wound of all, which is sin, and all of the separation it causes. -Separation from our most intimate relationship with God. - Separation and disintegration even within ourselves. Separation and alienation from other people, family separation, social isolation, all of that is caused by sin. All of that Jesus came to heal. And, the physical healings that he did in the gospels and that he still does today are signs of that deepest healing, that ultimate healing, which will only be completed one day when we are raised from the dead. And, we are brought into the very life of God, body and soul forever, in infinite joy, infinite bliss, and a life without any tears, without any sorrow, without any suffering. That's what he came to do for us.

It's interesting that the word health in English comes from the same root as the word, whole, W-H-O-L-E. Because, healing in its fullest sense is becoming whole as a human being, spirit, soul, and body. And additionally, the words health and whole are also related in English to the word, "holy." Wholeness is nothing other than holiness being restored in the union of love we were meant to have with the God who loves us, which is only possible by His grace, by His power at work in us.

Of all the healings Jesus did in the gospels, One of my favorites is the healing of a man with leprosy, which is in Mark chapter one. It's also in Matthew and Luke. And, in Mark's version, it says ***"a leper came to him, imploring him and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."*** Now, it's a very poignant scene because anyone who knows that culture knows that a leper shouldn't be there at all. Because a leper, according to the law of Moses, had to dwell apart from society, he had to stay isolated, he had to wear torn clothing everywhere he went. A leper had to hold his hand up like this and shout, "Unclean, unclean." Can you imagine the shame and the humiliation, the loneliness of a person already suffering such a deadly, contagious disease with his horrible, disfiguring, oozing sores.

Now, we could, well wonder, well, if that's from the law of Moses, how could the law of Moses, which comes from God be so harsh toward people already suffering so much? It's exactly here that we see the limitations of the law. The best that the law could do in a culture, a primitive culture without any medical infrastructure in the face of a deadly contagious disease, the best law could do was to place a kind

Pray More Healing Retreat 2020 - Transcript

of quarantine on people to prevent the spread of the disease; to limit it to some degree. It's exactly the same in regard to sin. The best that the law can do is to contain it to some degree, to put some limit on it, by commanding things like you shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. But, the law cannot heal the heart of a sinner, but Jesus can. He came to do what the law cannot do. And so, this leper must have heard about Jesus, the rabbi from Nazareth, whose healing people miraculously. And, he decided to come and we have to realize he makes a very bold move here. He takes a risk, it's a gamble. By coming to Jesus in the midst of a crowd, he risked facing horror and revulsion, and strong rebukes from people. Often faith involves a risk. Sometimes it even involves going against the crowd.

And so, he gives Jesus this poignant plea, "*if you will, you can make me clean.*" Notice how he says that. If you will, you can. So, he knows that Jesus can, he's able to heal. He's not sure though, that he wants to heal. How many of us are like that? We know that Jesus can heal. He's God, he can do anything. But, how much doubt do we have that he really wants to heal me? And, this leper in his boldness was greatly rewarded for his faith. So are we when we come to Jesus in faith. And, it says that Jesus was moved with compassion, and it's really hard to translate the word that's used there in the Greek, because it literally means Jesus was viscerally moved. He had a gut wrenching compassion for this man, and that tells us something really important about Jesus' motive for healing. We tend to think, well, he did his healings as a kind of planned demonstration that he really is the son of God. Well, they do demonstrate that, but what do the gospel show us about his motive? It was his compassion for that one desperate person in front of him.

And, he said to that man, "***I do will it, be made clean.***" Just imagine the look in the eyes of Jesus, as he said that. "***I do will it.***" We need to see that gaze of love. It's as if Jesus is saying, you wonder whether I want to make you clean, whether I want to heal you? Don't you realize this is why I came? It's my joy to heal you. This is why I'm about to lay down my life for you on the cross. "***I do will it, be made clean.***" And, the gospel also tells us that Jesus stretched out his hand to touch that man. Now, if you were there in the crowd, you probably would have heard a gasp as people realized, "look at that! He's about to touch a leper." Because, everybody in that culture knew you don't do that. Because, what happens if you touch an unclean person, somebody who's ritually impure? You become unclean. That's how the laws of ritual purity worked. Like, if you have a bucket of dirty water and a bucket of clean water, and you pour them together, what have you got, dirty water. That's how it worked. But, what happens when Jesus touches this man? All of a sudden the ritual purity laws are turned upside down. And,

Pray More Healing Retreat 2020 - Transcript

instead of the unclean overpowering the clean, the clean triumphs. Jesus' cleanness is more powerful than anyone's uncleanness. His holiness, his cleanness cannot be contaminated by anyone else. It's a powerful message for anyone who feels too unclean to come to Jesus. And, there's so many people who feel that way, who feel that they're unworthy or they've done the unforgivable sin, or they've blown it so many times, they're filled with shame. They don't believe they can come to Jesus or that they're worthy to be healed. In fact, the answer to that is, it's true. We're not worthy, nobody's worthy, but Jesus doesn't heal because people are worthy. He heals because that's who he is.

And so, he touched that, man, and there's this dramatic reversal of the ritual purity laws. And, how do we know that? Because, the guy's not a leper anymore, he's healed. And, I picture him looking at his hands and his arms, and his legs, and suddenly realizing and being absolutely stunned. And, I've seen it happen in our own time. I've seen many times Jesus heal people on the spot. And, very often the reaction you see is they're so stunned they can't take it in at first. They can't compute. It takes time for it to sink in. And then, often when they finally realize they have been healed, they begin to weep. And then, very often the people watching and witnessing it also begin to weep, because a healing is a revelation of God.

When we see someone healed sovereignly, miraculously by God, we have a whole new revelation of who he really is, the Lord, our healer. Well, then as the story wraps up, it says, "***Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away. And said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded.'***"

Now, it's very interesting that Jesus, after this marvelous healing tells them and to keep quiet, don't tell anybody. And, you wonder, well, why did he say that? Doesn't Jesus want people to spread the good news? Well, we have to understand it in the context of the times. During Jesus's earthly ministry, there was a very great danger of his mission as a messiah being drastically misunderstood, in a worldly, political, military sense. As the powerful warrior who would come to overthrow the Roman government. And, Jesus had to reveal in his own time, in his own way, that his true mission was against a much bigger enemy than the Roman empire, sin and Satan. And, that he would be victorious over them, not by a military conquest, but by laying down his life on the cross. That's why so often he told people to keep their healing secret. It wasn't yet the time to reveal the full mission, the full accomplishment of the Father's plan.

Pray More Healing Retreat 2020 - Transcript

Now, we also have to realize that once Jesus completed his mission and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, the time for the secret is over. 2000 years later, I'm not sure all Catholics have gotten that memo. It's no longer the time to keep quiet about it. If the Lord has healed you in some way that is medically inexplicable, the right response is to tell people about it, because it bears witness to the goodness of God. It builds up other people's faith. It gives glory to Jesus.

Now, Jesus told the man this. And he said, "***Show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded.***" It's very interesting if you cross reference and look up, well, what did Moses command for the healing of a skin disease? It's in Leviticus chapter 14. And, what it says is that you need to take two birds. One of them gets sacrificed and the other dipped in the blood of the first, flies away free. Do you see? If that man did what Jesus told him to do, he had a powerful image before his eyes of what the Lord had just done for him. One, is sacrificed and the other dipped in his blood, cleansed by his blood, flies away free, that's us.

Now, it's not that that man could have understood it at that moment, but maybe later he understood that all of Jesus' healings came at a cost. The highest possible cost, the cost of his own life poured out on the cross. That's how much he loves us. It says in the Gospel of Matthew chapter eight, verse 16, "***Jesus cast out the spirits and he healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, Isaiah. He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.***"

That means that when Jesus went through his passion, he took upon himself, not only every sin ever committed by any human being throughout the whole of human history, but also all the consequences of sin, all the darkness, all of the sickness, the disease, the natural disasters, the injuries, in some mysterious way, he took it all upon himself and nailed it to the cross. That's how much he loves us.

Well, it says then that the leper, despite what Jesus had just asked him to do, went out and began to talk freely about it and spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places. Notice what just happened? Jesus has just traded places with a leper. Now, this leper who was the outcast is free to come back into society and mingle with other people. He's free once again, to enter the temple and worship God with God's people, and Jesus has become the outcast. It's another sign. This whole account of this man being healed is an image of what the Lord has done for every one of us. He says, give me your sickness, your leprosy, your spiritual leprosy, we're all spiritual lepers. We are all disfigured and deformed in various ways by sin and the effects of sin. We're all alienated in some way from God, and, from the people of God. Jesus said, give me

Pray More Healing Retreat 2020 - Transcript

all of that garbage. I will gladly take it. I've already nailed it to the cross. And, I will give you in exchange my divine life.

So, the Lord is such a generous giver. And, what does he ask of us? That we would be generous receivers in return. That we would not hold back from receiving what God has for us out of a false humility, or a sense of unworthiness, or unbelief, or self-preoccupation, or any other reason. But, that we would be like children with wide open hands, who would say, Lord, your goodness is so far beyond what I think, or what I could imagine. I want everything you have for me. I open myself radically to receive all that you have for me. And, I ask you Lord to heal me in all the ways that I need to be healed.

When you were read through the gospels, you see there's not a single person that Jesus rebukes or chastises for asking for healing. There's only one response that he asks for sometimes, not in every case, but we see in many, many cases, what's the one response he looks for, *faith*. He wants people to participate, to engage with him in the process of healing and the way he wants them to do that is by faith. And, then once someone has been healed, what does he desire, gratitude.

Remember of 10 lepers who were healed on another occasion, nine just went off on their way. Only one responded rightly. He came back thanking and praising the Lord. That is the right response. Even if we see the tiniest little healing, you know, if your pain level is an 8.5 and it goes to an 8.43, the right response for that slight diminishment of pain is to thank the Lord and then ask him for more.

And so, I invite you during this healing retreat. As you read scripture, as you pray, as you spend time with the Lord, open your heart, just ask the Lord to show you how he wants you to open your heart more widely to his gift of healing, and let him surprise you.