

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle within us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. May the words of my mouth, the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight O Lord, you who are rock, redeemer & Renewer of us all. Amen.**

Grace and Peace be with you, dear Friends!

In our current sermon series, 'FAITH &...' we have partnered the scheduled psalm with the gospel lesson to uncover the call to faith in all circumstances and situations. We have heard that the smallest amount of faith in God can be very powerful. We have heard the expectation that faith grows within us as we trust in God's presence and promises. Today, the psalm offers us a model for healing and reconciliation. The gospel lesson demonstrates that faith (belief or trust) in Jesus is key. In a Wesleyan view, healing is a metaphor for salvation that encompasses body and soul. Healing activities are a part of God's plan for restoring creation. Treating sickness, pain, and preparing for death are all means for healing. God works through it all, naturally or supernaturally, in the present. Wesleyans believe full healing comes upon resurrection. John Wesley taught that "healing comes through multiple means, including prayer, traditional herbal remedies, and 'modern' medicine"<sup>1</sup>.

Today in our scriptures

Ps 130: Psalm 130 is classified as one of the seven penitential psalms. It features a lament, crying out to God in great distress and seeking forgiveness and help. This is also a pilgrimage song. Pilgrimage songs were sung by the people and communities journeying to the Temple for the three special feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Succoth (Feast of Booths).

Pilgrimage songs are relatively short. Often these psalms have sections that identify the nature of God, the individual, and the community. It is for

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<sup>1</sup> Wesley Study Bible (CEB), Core Term: Healing. @2012. 82.

this reason that this psalm is a model of reconciliation, restoration and healing. In short, it offers a pattern for healing people and relationships between people, communities, and nations. For God's people on the pilgrimage journey, this is a heart preparation, an act of worship, a call to reflection on trust in God and living in alignment with God's ways.

Mark 5: 21-43: A common technique within the gospel of Mark is the sandwiching of two stories together so that the readers will interpret them in tandem. In today's Gospel lesson, Mark sandwiches together the stories of Jesus raising a young girl from the dead and a woman touching Jesus to be healed of a hemorrhage. It is important to note that these two intertwined stories immediately follow a healing story (casting out a unclean spirit in an 'unclean'/gentile place) which IMMEDIATELY followed last week's story of calming the storm and the Disciples asking the question: 'Who is this man that even wind and sea obey him!'

There are many ways to address these two stories of healing. I like to view them side by side and discern the significant areas that connect across the stories. These areas are: age, status, community.

AREA	Daughter of Jairus	Woman
Situation	12yo, ill, near death; Death= unclean Father seeks Jesus overtly	12 years of bleeding disorder Woman seeks Jesus quietly
Status	Leader in synagogue; Privilege	Destitute; no \$; 'unclean'; marginalized
Community impact	Models faith/trust in Jesus; restored to new life in health & status	Called Daughter; restored to new life in health & community status

In this passage Jesus once again answers the question of his identity and authority. In these two stories, we are witnesses to faith and healing in both large and small ways. What does this mean for us as faithful followers and as a faith community?

First, this narrative demonstrates that being a presence in the community is essential so that anyone in need can seek community, support and healing. Jairus knew to seek out Jesus. The woman, too, heard the word and sought out Jesus. Saint James must be a positive Word in the community.

Second, people need multiple ways to connect with the faith community, in person and online. This is one reason we have upgraded our ability to share worship online, upgraded our website and regular posts on social media.

Third, we must not shy away from the challenges of social justice just because we are uncomfortable with conflict or differences of opinion. Rather, we are called to serve in peace, bringing healing with us as we grow in ministry.

For example, through this season of pandemic, Saint James became an active member of the local Community Organizations Active in Disaster. Through your generosity, We have been a key contributor in fighting food scarcity. We collaborated with several other faith communities and the school system to fill the void in winter coats.

As Pastor and a member of the local Clergy Alliance, I participated in peaceful marches in support of drawing attention to injustices occurring to black and brown people. Some in the congregation were disturbed by this.

This Fall a SJ bible study group explored injustice and reconciliation through studying how to be the bridge in building a community that is supportive of ALL persons by engaging in dialogue, listening, and seeking to understand.

A key component of building bridges in human relationships is listening, lamenting, being respectful of the life experiences of other people, and seeking to bring mutual understanding as a means of healing and new life.

I and another congregation member have taken a further step to build community and map a path toward justice through training in facilitating people's suppers. There will be more to come about this opportunity.

Finally, we will renew growing as disciples as we begin conversations on the matters of the General Conference and the future of the UMC with regard to valuing and welcoming every person, the gifts and talents bestowed in them and the call to serve God's people no matter age, skin color, country of origin or their identity as a child of God.

In this psalm prayer, we have a strategy for bringing healing with us as we serve God's people... with trust that God has forgiven us and is steadfast and faithful in love and presence with us through it all.

In this gospel lesson, we can see the promise of salvation, in the healing of our every ill, seeking God in prayer and taking obedient action in faith. Let us remember...

As we work to address needs in the community, God stands with us.

As we work to address evil & injustice, God is with us.

As we work to value all persons for their talents and gifts, especially LGBTQI+ persons, God is with us.

As we work to be united in living out our faith with love, justice, peace, healing and mission, God is with us.

**May it be so! So be it. Amen.**

**Let us JOIN TOGETHER WITH THE LITURGIST, Debra Bostron, AS SHE LEADS A ...**

*Prayer of Response*

*A Statement of Faith*

*UMH 888*