

**“Do You Want to Be Made Well”**  
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**Menifee United Church of Christ**

God of Grace,  
May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,  
come from you, and be a blessing to those who need them.  
Amen.

Three people in the health care industry died. A doctor, a nurse, and a health insurance executive: They all went to heaven. Peter met them at the pearly gates. Peter said to the doctor, “What have you done to help people?” The doctor said, “I devoted my life to making people healthy.” St. Peter said, “That’s great! You can go into heaven.” St. Peter said to the nurse, “What have you done to help people?” The nurse said, “I devoted my life to making people healthy.” St. Peter said, “That’s great! You can go into heaven.” Then St. Peter said to the health insurance executive, “What have you done to help people?” The health insurance executive said, “I devoted my life to making people healthy.” St. Peter said, “That’s great! You can go into heaven. But only for two nights.”

How important is our health? I think we all know it’s very important. Very, very important. I remember a TV commercial from years ago that said, “If you’ve got your health, you’ve got just about everything.” And that’s so true. And the opposite is also true, unfortunately. If you don’t have your health, you’ve got next to nothing. If you have a billion dollars, but you don’t have your health, it’s not worth two cents. We need our health. We have to have our health.

I went to see my doctor years ago, for my annual checkup. I do that every few years or so. He was listening to my heart, my chest, my back with the stethoscope. All of a sudden, he got agitated. He listened more intently. He said, “I think you’ve had a mild heart attack.” “What?” Then he went out and got a machine and put tabs all over me and I guess an EKG machine and he looked at the readout and he said, “I think you’ve had a mild heart attack.” “What?” He said, “I’m going to send a nurse in and she’ll get the cardiologist’s office on the phone, and set up an appointment for you to see the cardiologist.” “What?” He goes out, the nurse comes in, she gets on the phone, she says a few things, she looks at me and says, “Next Thursday?” “What?” She says, “Yes, next Thursday will be fine.” Then she says a few more things and she looks at me and says, “Three o’clock?” “What?” She says, “Yes, next Thursday at three o’clock will be fine.” Then she says a few more things and she looks at me and she says, “Roger Miller?” I said, “King of the Road?” She gives me a dirty look and says, “Yes, Dr. Roger Miller next Thursday at three o’clock will be fine.” I knew at that point, for some reason, that everything was going to be OK. The nurse goes out, the doctor comes back and he says, “I wouldn’t do any Roger Miller, King of the Road, jokes when you go see Dr. Miller.” I said, “Yeah, OK.” So I went to see the cardiologist and he put some kind of gel on my chest and put some kind of contraption on there and he could see my heart beating. I could see it, too. And he looks all around and says, “You haven’t had a heart attack.” Thank you, Jesus!!!

What do you do to stay healthy? Do you exercise regularly? Do you eat well. Do you take whatever medication your doctor tells you to take? Do you get enough sleep? Do you take care of yourself? I think it’s up to each one of us to take responsibility for our own health, even if we have doctors and whatever to help us, because our health is so important.

Some musicians, maybe Roger Miller, know about the importance of healing power. Listen to Elton John, music icon. He says, “Music has healing power. It can take us out of ourselves for a few hours.”

Do you use music to help you heal or to feel better about things? Do you listen to Beethoven for healing power? Or maybe you listen to The Beatles for healing power? Do you listen to Mozart for healing power? Or maybe you listen to Motown for healing power. Maybe it can’t make us physically better, but maybe it lifts our spirits a little bit, soothes our souls.

Some politicians know about healing power. Listen to a long-ago politician, the vice president of the United States, Hubert H. Humphrey. He said, “Friendship and love can help us to heal.” And that’s so true.

Do you have friends that can make you feel better? Loved ones that can make you feel better? I know when I get a call from my daughter, it lifts my spirits. Are you a friend of people and help them feel better? Are you helpful to your loved ones and make them feel better? Friendship and love maybe can’t heal us physically, but can lift our spirits and soothe our souls.

Jesus helped a man be healed. Jesus went to Jerusalem for a festival. He came upon a pool that was said to have healing powers. The water churned up, people could go in the water and, according to the Bible, be healed. According to the gospel of John, Jesus saw a man there who was ill, an invalid, we assume. Jesus looked at him and said, "Do you want to be made well?" The man said to Jesus, "Yes." The man had been ill for 38 years. He said, "But by the time I get up and get into the pool, people step in front of me and I miss the opportunity." For thirty-eight years this guy had been ill, been an invalid. Jesus said to him, "Stand up. Pick up your mat. And walk." The man stood up, picked up his mat, and walked. He was healed instantly by Jesus.

Did you notice the question Jesus asked him though? "Do you want to be made well?" Did he have to want to be made well in order for Jesus to heal him? Was it a partnership between him and Jesus? "Do you want to be made well?" It seems like it depended on the man to want to be made well. We have to want it. We can have the best health care in the world, perhaps, Jesus seems to be saying. But unless we want to be made well, we won't be able to be made well.

Jesus couldn't do much healing in his home town. According to the gospel of Matthew, Jesus goes to his home town, preaches and teaches, but his boyhood neighbors say, "Who's this guy? Who's this Jesus? Isn't he the carpenter's son? Isn't he just the son of Mary? What makes him so special? He's not all that and a bag of chips. This is just the guy we remember as a little tyke, walking around the neighborhood. He's not anybody special. He's just Jesus, the carpenter's son. And according to the gospel of Matthew, Jesus couldn't do much there, couldn't heal much, couldn't do many miracles, because of their unbelief.

Is being healed, being helped by Jesus, dependent on our belief? If we don't have belief, can Jesus not help us, not heal us? Do you have to have belief in Jesus if you want to be made well, if you want to be helped, if you want to be healed?

Jesus encountered a Gentile woman who did have faith. Her daughter, according to the gospel of Matthew, was taken up by a demon, and she wanted Jesus to heal her daughter. So she cried out, "Son of God, Jesus, have mercy on my daughter!" And this is one of the more problematic passages in Scripture, because Jesus says, "I have come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Because she was a Gentile, he said, "It's not right to take the children's food and give it to the dogs." But then the woman said, "Yes, Lord, but even dogs get scraps from the table." And Jesus said, "Great is your faith. Your daughter has been made well." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Now maybe Jesus was testing her faith, but doesn't this seem to say that Jesus has come for everyone? He said he came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but then he helped a Gentile. And a Gentile, as you know, is anyone that isn't Jewish. So was Jesus called to heal everyone? Has Jesus come to make everyone well? Has Jesus come to love everyone? Christians and Jews, Buddhists and Hindus, Muslims and atheists and everyone?

God blesses everyone. According to the Psalmist, God blesses everyone. God is gracious to everyone. "May God be gracious to us. May God bless us," the Psalmist writes. And God's saving power, writes the Psalmist, is for all the nations. All nations doesn't mean just America. It means America and Mexico and Canada, England and South Africa, all nations! God blesses, God loves, God's saving power is for everyone, just as Jesus heals everyone.

A mom wanted to be healed, spiritually healed. She came to me years ago, came to my office in tears. She said that she went to her clergy person and asked her clergy person to baptize her three year old son. Her clergy person looked at some records and said, "Well, I see you haven't attended church much. And you haven't given much to the church." The clergy person said, "If you come to church more often and if you give more to the church, then I'll baptize your son." And she was in tears. And she asked me if I would baptize her son and how soon could I do it. I said, "Does this Sunday sound OK?" And she was overjoyed. And I did baptize her son. I also baptized her daughter, who was about five, and I also baptized her other son, who was about seven. And the funny thing is, after that, every Sunday morning her three kids would come into their parents' bedroom and say, "Get up! Get up! Get up! We've got to go see Pastor Bill! We gotta go see Pastor Bill!"

Do you want to be made well? Do you know someone who wants to be made well? Are they suffering from, maybe, spiritual abuse, like this woman? Have they been abused by a church, a house of worship or a clergy person, either spiritually or perhaps physically? Do they want to be healed of addiction? Maybe to drugs or alcohol or gambling? Do they want to be healed of an emotional trauma, maybe a physical trauma, maybe they were abused as children by their parents, or as adults by a spouse or a significant other. Do they want to be healed? Do they believe? Do you believe? Do you want to be healed? I think we have to get the proper medical attention, maybe psychological attention, but I think we also can help our healing by believing in Jesus, by believing in the healing power of Jesus, by believing in the saving power of God. I think it all combines together to help us heal.

I went to a clergy cluster meeting this week. It's where about half a dozen of us get together, pastors of different UCC churches from within about a fifty mile radius. We get together and the first thing we do is have a little devotion time. Somebody leads it. This past week was led by someone who had a big candle on a table that we all sat around. It was a Christ candle. There were little candles around that, in front us. We all could take a couple of candles and light our candles in honor of our loved ones, or our church, or whatever. We could light a couple of candles from the Christ candle. I noticed, and this is going to seem obvious, but I noticed that after we lit about a dozen little candles off the big Christ candle, the flame of the Christ candle was the same as before we lit our own candles. It didn't diminish it.

What does that tell us? I think that symbolizes that Jesus doesn't have a limited amount of healing power. God doesn't have a limited amount of saving power. It's unlimited. God's love is unlimited. In addition to being unconditional. So God can love seven people or seven billion people. Jesus can heal and help seven people or seven billion people. God's saving power and Jesus' healing power is not diminished by the number of people they help. Do you want to be made well? Stand up. Pick up your mat. And walk.

Let us pray...

God of love,  
Help us to heal.  
Help us to be made well.  
And help us to help others to heal and to be made well.  
Now and forevermore.  
By the power of the Holy Spirit.  
And in the name of Jesus.  
Amen.