

COMBINED SERVICE OF HEALING AUGUST 29, 2010 CYCLE

“C”

TITLE: HEALED BY THE TOUCH OF CHRIST

READINGS: James 5:13-16, Matthew 9:18-26

One of the most important of the five senses which we possess is the sense of touch. We have been touched and will touch others many times and in many different ways. We use this powerful God-given gift often even though we may not realize it. We touch others for good, for bad, for love, for hate, to heal and to destroy. Donna and I just returned from a short trip to the Oregon Coast. A few days ago we decided to go to Mo's clam Chowder House in Lincoln City for dinner. As we were pulling into the parking lot at Mo's, two young parents were walking along the sidewalk with their four small children. One was in the mother's arms, the other three, close in age, were walking along with them. One little boy suddenly started to run and dart across in front of us. I hit the breaks to miss him and Donna opened her window and said, "Please watch your child, we almost hit him." The man turned to her and said, "Watch where you're parking, just shut your mouth!" The young mother keeping her head and eyes cast down, walked on silently, as the father barked orders to their children. Donna turned to look at me, her eyes were filled with tears. We were all touched. From Donna's touch of loving concern, came the opposite reaction, the man's touch of anger and rejection. I suspect from the silent reaction of the man's wife and children that he may well be an abusive father.

Today, Jesus gives us another example of touch. He was on his way to make an emergency sick call. As we heard in the Gospel reading, a synagogue leader had asked him to come and lay his hands upon his daughter who had just died. He knew in faith that she would be healed by the Lord's loving, healing touch. Matthew tells us a large crowd followed and pressed upon him. Then suddenly there was another touch. The woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for so many years knew by her faith that "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well," and she was. "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." What is miraculous is that in the surge and jostling of that crowd, Jesus felt the touch of a single person, a person who in faith and confidence in him, knew she would be healed. Christ felt the touch of one shy, humble, faith-filled woman.

We should never, ever say that in the enormity of the cosmos God cannot care about my concerns and me. Not only does God care, he actually solicits our concerns, “Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you peace.”

Jesus also addressed this lady as “daughter”. It is the only time in Scripture that Jesus used that term. Each time we call upon him, he also addresses us in that personal, affectionate term: “son” “daughter” your faith has made you well. He invites each of us to come to him in faith, and he will heal us.

Jesus shows us two kinds of touch in this story, the first being physical touch, the other spiritual touch. So often when he wanted to transmit his power of love, he physically touched people, he made mud with his spittle and put it on the eyes of a blind man, he gathered the children in his arms to bless them, he would lay his hands upon lepers, and in our story today, he took the girl’s hand and raised her up to life. The church, too, wants us to place our hands upon each other in healing love. “Are any among you sick?” it says in James, “They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.” Jas.5:14. An embrace, a kiss, an arm on the shoulder, a pat on the back – all of these are ways of expressing a love which goes beyond words and brings healing.

If we are out of touch with people, then perhaps we are also out of touch with God. In imitation of Christ, we are to go out and touch the lives of people. As the family of God we are called upon to reach out and touch the lives of the least, the last, the lost, and the lonely. Professor Henry Mitchell once approached his doctor to thank him for his attentiveness and care for his wife Ella. The doctor’s response amazed him. “First of all,” he said, “give God the praise. Then thank the people for their fervent prayers. Then maybe I come in somewhere on down the line.” He added that doctors don’t ever heal anybody the Lord does. It’s just as Mark Twain once said, “God heals, the doctor collects the fee.”

Pastor Duane Windemiller tells about how years ago he was conducting a funeral at a church in New Hampshire. The funeral was for an old family physician who had lived 102 years. A woman stood up in the middle of the service and, with tears running down her face, said, “Whenever we heard his old Model T turning into our yard, we started to get better.” I would imagine that is how people felt

when Jesus came into their community. It was his presence, his touch which affected people's response. They knew he was a compassionate healer. He didn't heal everyone in the community, but those who found themselves in his presence and had faith in him, experienced his healing touch. Sometimes Jesus heals the body, sometimes the mind, sometimes the soul.

Jesus comes into our community today through you and me. We are encouraged to touch others with the healing touch of Christ. When we are together, either as a family or a church, we provide healing support. Pain and suffering come to all of us. But we can be supported in difficult times by the touch of one another's love. The knowledge that we have someone; that we are not alone; that there is someone who is willing to touch us, hold us, keep us from being destroyed, is the touch of Christ today. Make his healing touch present in your lives today, present to you and through you to others. **Amen.**

Pastor Barney