

2009, 2-8 This time make it personal Mark 1:29-39 (Epiphany 5)

It happens to all of us sooner or later. We have heard about cancer. We have heard about heart disease. We have heard about strokes.

But then it happens to us, or a family member. We get the disease. We are personally affected by these deadly killers. It feels more real now. We feel more desperate. We get more worried than ever.

Before, we offered encouragement to others who were going through health issues. We told them it would be OK. We told them God was with them and he has a plan for everything.

I can't help but wonder what was going through Peter's mind when his mother in law was in bed with a fever. Peter had seen Jesus do other healings and cast out demons. But this time it was personal. Someone from Peter's own family needed Jesus help.

This event could have very well changed Peter's perspective on Jesus. Each person that Jesus healed had a name. Each of them had families. Each of them had real worries and problems.

And we have to infer from this story, like the many other Jesus healing stories in the Bible, that Jesus had a good bedside manner. He wasn't just walking along the road pointing fingers at people and they would be healed instantly. He took the time to talk with them. He took the time to help them up. Jesus had a personal touch about him.

It is no wonder Jesus needed to take that time to pray and be in a solitary place. He was bearing the burdens of the people. He was praying for them. He was trying to deal with the problems of each person that he came in contact with.

The son of a pastor saw his father often go off by himself to pray. One day the pastor let his son come along. Sadly when the man got to the place where they were going he just started crying. “Dad, what is wrong?” The son said. His dad replied, “Sometimes the burdens are just so large that I carry from the people who are suffering. That is what I often do is just cry so that I can place those burdens on God.”

Jesus also cried in the Bible when it became incredibly personal for him. His close friend Lazarus had died. Jesus maintained his composure until he was brought up close to where Lazarus was. He saw Mary and Martha crying and he was so strongly affected that “Jesus wept.” John 11:35, the shortest verse in the Bible.

As a pastor, I can see exactly how this would happen. Most of the time I can somewhat separate myself from the people who are in need. I can offer them help and assurance of God’s love. But when someone in my own family is sick and suffering, or I am at the funeral of my loved one, I find myself just as worried, upset, and emotional as everyone else.

We all can bear the burdens together for loss and illness. None of you need to be out there alone trying to bear the burden yourself. That doesn’t mean that everyone needs to start crying and hugging each other. It just means that all Christians together can help bear the burden of one person or one family and give assurance.

When Jesus came he did not come to just make people feel better. He did not come to make people healthy on the outside. He did not come to tell people it’s going to be OK.

He came to actually take that burden of sin and death away. He came to die and place that weight on his shoulders. He came to take death upon himself and free us completely from the worry and anxiety and pain of sin.

It is only natural to have those feelings, but the reality is that Jesus has completely healed us. He has healed us from the real disease of sin. He has cured us from the real problem of death.

As Christians we can communicate his healing. We can pray, like through our prayer chain, when someone needs our prayers. We can talk with someone who is struggling. We can tell people about the great Physician of our souls.

Medical care has come a long way in our life time. It is incredible to see people have heart surgery and get back on there feet. Many more people seemed to be even healed from the deadly cancer that seems so common today. Scientists continue to research for more cures for these deadly killers.

But even doctors and nurses can admit that medicine has its limitations. Sometimes the surgeons have to say, there is nothing we can do. Sometimes the doctor's say the chances of survival are not good. And sometimes Ambulances and the paramedics can only go so fast.

But with God there is always room for a miracle. There can always be a glimmer of hope through Jesus. There will always be a healing if that is what God wants to happen.

Jesus miracles of healing were so popular that people were coming from everywhere to get his personal touch. He was becoming the most popular medicine on

the market. But again Jesus realized that it was not his sole purpose to heal. He wanted to move on so he could preach the message of salvation, not just healing.

We sometimes don't experience the healing that we so desperately pray for. But that is not the point. The point is to share that message of hope that is not just for this life, but for eternity. Often it is only through these difficult sickness and deaths that we grow closer to God and we find opportunities to share our faith.

We may be tempted to give up hope because of a terrible disease that just never gets better and when there is no physical healing for us. But we still have the touch of Jesus. We still have each other to encourage and be encouraged.

The sequoia trees of California tower as much as 300 feet above the ground,. Strangely, these giants have unusually shallow root systems that reach out in all directions to capture the greatest amount of surface moisture. Seldom will you see a redwood standing alone, because high winds would quickly uproot it. That is why they grow in clusters. Their intertwining roots provide support for one another against the storms. When we gather together, we provide similar support. Pain and suffering and illness come to all of us. But, just like those giant sequoia trees, we can be supported in those difficult times by the knowledge that we have one another.

It sure would be nice if today we had spiritual healings for peoples diseases like Jesus healings. It sure would be nice if even we could do healings like the disciples did who had that magic touch. It sure would be nice if those healings on TV by those spiritual healers was actually real and not a big fake show.

But we, like Peter, or Mary and Martha, have the assurance of Jesus personal touch for us. His presence is there, although we may not see him. Praying constantly to him, there is no one else better that we can hold on to. Amen