

## ***Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood, May 29, 2016***

### **Notes for the sermon on *The Power to Heal***

**Ps 96:1-9 and Luke 7:1-10 – Sermon Text = Luke 7:7**

***“... I did not presume to come to you.  
But only speak the word,  
and let my servant be healed.***

**[Hymns = 286, 299, 300]**

**Key ideas = God has the power to heal – but how that happens, what the dynamics are, what flow of energies are involved, what faculties and influences are at work are a mystery – we see through a glass darkly – in this story from Luke, the centurion knows that healing in the hands of God – for all of its mystery, it lies in a relationship with God – in faith and trust in God’s wise care – not in our desperate desires for comfort in our physical bodies alone**



### **Another friend died this week**

David Grier and I met arguing whether bank loans to South Africa were a positive or negative influence in ending apartheid – he was a senior executive with the Royal Bank – I was chairing the Taskforce of the Churches and Corporate Responsibility – we enjoyed our disagreements so much we became fast friends – I did the wedding for he and Annette when they moved to Toronto – David’s health has been declining for years – his son, Jon, emailed me this week that he thought he was going “to dodge this bullet, just like he had so many in the past” – but he didn’t – my prayers went unanswered - key parts of his body broke down further and he passed on early Friday morning

## Watching bodies break down and souls stay resilient

As I mentioned in our Memorize & Ponder this week, part of the Christian perspective on illness has to be a witness to the full picture of what a human being is – not just a body in which we try to understand, then manipulate, the physical dynamics – but an embodied soul in which everything is integrated by the loving breath of God – knowing full well that the body is temporary, fragile, subject to corrosive influences, all the time rusting out – but that a body cared for in a loving way can bear the soul through many years in this dimension of our lives

## Resilience in our souls

In many ways, this story in Luke is more about faith than it is about healing – it's about the resilience in the centurion's soul that arises from his trust in God – part of Luke's purpose in telling this story is to emphasize that God's favour extends beyond the Jewish people – not to their exclusion, but to the inclusion of the Gentile world – but it can also be seen as a story to inspire the resilience of faith – this is the source from which true healing flows – the true healing of a closer relationship with God, others, and ourselves – it's a healing, hard as it is to comprehend and accept, that always includes death

Three aspects of resilience in our souls are particularly important as we face illness – **first**, stay in touch with your community of support – be accepting of their care, appreciative of their efforts, and forgiving of their fumbles - **second**, grow in the grace of your relationship with God – pay particular attention to the soulful dimensions of your life – **third**, grow in the confidence that you are on a journey 'home' – to the heaven that God is bringing to full fruition – where justice, spirituality, relationships, and beauty will all come to full fruition in what that wonderful Shaker hymn, Simple Gifts, calls "the valley of love and delight."

David wasn't a practicing Christian – he was intrigued by theology – he had studied world religions with Wilfred Cantwell Smith at McGill in Montreal – we always had fascinating conversations about the good and ill that religions brought to human kind – his resilience came from his compassion, his joy in relationships, and his appreciation for beauty (a keen photographer), and a glass a day of fine Barbados rum

My teachers in resilience in the face of illness in this congregation are many – but I was thinking particularly this week of May Bate and Chrissie Halverson – May with her enduring love of church music as a source of comfort and Chrissie with her rock solid conviction that God was with her and had a plan, no matter what was happening

How God heals remains a mystery to me – but *that* God heals is a reality I trust – even, perhaps especially, when it takes us through the valley of the shadow of death – even there, we need fear no evil