

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Apr 15, 2018

What Is Perfect Health? (Psalm 4 & Acts 3:12-19)



**And by faith in his name, his name itself
has made this man strong,
whom you see and know;
and the faith that is through Jesus
has given him this perfect health
in the presence of you all.
(Acts 3:16)**

The story line of our passage/ text

Early Christians believed fervently in the power of Jesus to generate perfect health – the New Testament is filled with stories of such healing – this incident has Peter and John mediate the healing of a man crippled from birth – in his explanation, Peter names Jesus as the Author of life – names in the Bible have great significance – represent the full power of the person named - the most dramatic gift of perfect health for life, of course, was the resurrection – the generation of perfect health for life after death - but what was really going on here?

Provocative Points to Ponder

- Let me begin our Provocative Points to Ponder by saying that I really don't know what I'm talking about! – I have not come close to dying – I have not suffered chronic or even acute pain to the point of thinking that I'm going to die – I have not sat with and served anyone dying a long and agonizing death over weeks and months – so, there are depths of suffering and sorrow that I only know by listening to the witness of others – I approach this topic with the humility of an explorer and a learner – I hope something that I say may trigger your reflections and deepen your understanding of how faith in Jesus may generate what Peter calls 'perfect health'
- First, as read the stories of healing in the Scriptures, they are not simply about physical healings – not simply about feet and ankles being made strong enough to dance around – they are all about the restoration of healing relationships – the ill in New Testament times were expelled from society – they were marginalized, force to beg, avoided, shunned, rejected as burdens that families could not afford – they were lonely, afraid, and desperate – the healings that Jesus did all restored them to their communities, to relationships in which justice and kindness were restored – the restoration of their physical abilities reintegrated them into communities of affection, acceptance, and support – they were brought back into the energetic flow of love that is the life of communal faith and flourishing – a life full of dancing in praise of Jesus Christ, the Author of life
- Let's ponder next this idea that life is the energetic flow of love that originates from the Creator of all life in the universe – the frameworks for understanding this reality in New Testament times and in ours are dramatically different – our level of detailed understanding of how human beings work at all levels of their beings could not have

been remotely imagined by the people in the stories the New Testament records – we’ve both gained and lost much in that difference – we’ve gained great insight into how God made us, our complex systems for directing the flows of the energies that make up and connect our beings – we’ve lost, in many circles, a sense of the Author of life behind and within all of those systems – I wonder, even with the billions of dollars we are pouring into medical services, whether we are simply tinkering with the symptoms rather than getting to the true depth of perfect health?

- What is clear from all the healing stories in the New Testament is that, for the tellers of the stories and the mediators and recipients of the healings, faith in the power of Jesus to deliver what he promised is crucial – that’s what ‘name’ signified, in many ways – the power to deliver on your promise – perfect health was the generation by the Author of life of the ability to participate in the Commonwealth of God preached and taught by Jesus – and it’s clear in the Scriptures that participation is not confined to this life – nor is determined by the state of one’s physical health – it is a question of the way one appropriates the gift of faith – of one’s relationship with God, with others, and with one’s authentic purpose – those relationships are the key to perfect health, of entering consciously, humbly, and actively into the flow of God’s love as it nourishes flourishing for all the world
- We have a special appreciation here at Brentwood for the way the flow of God’s love comes to us through music, so let’s ponder further as Dan and Conrad play

Your Notes

Prayers of Thanks – for the remarkable support that all those touched by the tragedy in Humbolt, SK, have offered and received in the flow of God’s love that has been so eonderfully amplified over the past several days – may we find ways of sustaining that love without such disturbing reminders of our frailties and follies - (silence to consider this)

Prayers for Help – to resist the many and powerful forces that are risking our health through acts of war – help us resist it in prayer, in witness, in participating as citizens in our political systems, in challenging the attitudes that lead to war as we hear them in our circles of influence – (silence to consider this)

Prayers for Awe – at how your energy for life shows up in the midst of our love of death over and over again – in the medics, in the diplomats, in the people in the street, in the journalists, in your churches and other places of worship – (silence to consider this)