

## Healing and the Kingdom of God

Acts 28:1-10 Luke 4:31-44

In the middle of a series on the Kingdom of God ..... reminder of last week

Looked at the different ways in which Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God

1. Within us .... the Holy Spirit right inside, changing us and making us more like Jesus
2. Out there ..... in the future ... the promise of glory... when we will see Jesus face to face .... All will be renewed..... no more tears.....  
pain and death will be no more Kingdom of God in all its fullness
3. Right here .... Close by, in the now, around us wherever we are .... Where we go to work or college, in our homes or places of worship. A present reality, God's rule touching our lives and bringing a glimpse of heaven. The Holy Spirit working in our lives, empowering us, making it possible for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Sometimes giving us a taster of the good things to come ... a little bit of tomorrow's bread today

This morning look at Luke 4:31-44..... and what this passage tells us about healing and the Kingdom of God ....

.....these events come at the very start of Jesus' public ministry.....

- announced his manifesto in synagogue in Nazareth...
- rejected by the people of Nazareth he goes to Capernaum....n. shore of Lake Galilee
- His work there is marked by three things.....

1. **He taught**.....verse 31 ... They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority....compelling teacher.....and he spoke with a power that was lacking in other rabbis.....wherever he went he taught the things of God.....in fact, as He moves on from Capernaum he says 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent

2. **He cast out demons**.....in this instance it involved a man in the synagogue vv33-35.....and strange though it may sound to modern ears this was a regular part of Jesus' work..... freeing people from the things that bound them .... Not made clear ... fears, phobias, addictive habits, epilepsy, mental illnesses, contact with evil spirits..... anything that stopped them being free to live as God intended

3. **He healed**.....here it was Simon Peter's mother-in-law who had a high fever..... verse 39...and this led in turn to others coming at sundown with their ailments - and wherever Jesus went, he healed...leper & paralytic & blind & deaf.....healing was a significant part of Jesus' ministry.....

**Maybe a question we need to ask, though, is why did Jesus heal?** When he had so much to say...& his words were so life-giving.....why add to this with acts of healing.....??

- Not that he was just showing-off....! ...."look what I can do".... At times he was reticent....
- Not just doing a good turn or two.....though it is very clear that he was moved again & again to heal by a deep compassion for those who were suffering.....
- Perhaps getting closer to the truth if we are to say that the healings of Jesus drew attention to his teaching.....that they stopped people in their tracks long enough for them to hear what he had to say.....that certainly was one of the effects we see in this passage from Luke.....All the people were amazed and said to each other, 'What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!' And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

- Was there also another purpose, to alert people to His deeper identity as God in the world...the King of the Kingdom...the long-awaited Messiah...the miracles pointed people to Jesus himself.....and were designed to do so...so much so that John in his gospel describes all the healings and miraculous events as “signs”.....that pointed beyond themselves to the greater identity of the healer.....and led people to begin to recognise who Jesus might actually be.....

But there is, something even more exciting going on in the healings of Jesus....that part of the perfect future kingdom was invading the kingdom of this world .....when the King is amongst us he brings with him the things of the future kingdom...

What does that mean for us now?

1. That when we read about Jesus miracles we see little bits of our own future being revealed.....Jesus’ healings are visual aids ....signs ...demonstrations....of the Kingdom of God. Glimpses of heaven.
2. That we need to take Jesus at His word when He tells us that because His Spirit is now with us “even greater things” can happen amongst us....the New Testament is very clear in its understanding of the Spirit as the conveyor of the future kingdom into the now.....continuing the work of Jesus....but making it available in every place, time & culture.....means we can live as Kingdom people, and we too can experience the blessings of the future, perfect Kingdom.....
3. That we can pray for healing....not just as a natural part of the goodness of God in creation.....but as a foretaste of **the goodness of God in heaven.**

So we will still approach the doctor ,the dentist, the nurses, pharmacists and physios, we will thank God for them and their skills.....and take their advice and medication. They are all agents of God’s healing work and we will look for it wherever it can be found within the goodness of God’s creation.....but we can also approach God himself.....asking that we might have some of tomorrow’s healing today.....this should be a normal mechanism in our lives in the kingdom.....

4. Means.....we can expect healing.....but as these are tasters of the age to come, not the main course, we have to expect that the fullness of healing might have to wait until heaven.....accept that we can’t have it all yet..... our experience of healing in the here and now will always be partial....always be intersecting with the fallen-ness of the world....with suffering....with pain...with disappointment.....with death itself.....  
With glimpses of glory, but not the fullness of it.....

Healing, in the broadest sense of the word, means anything that makes us more whole as people. It may be healing of an anxiety or fear. It may be the finding of a deep inner peace in a stressful situation. It may be the restoration of a relationship or the bringing of forgiveness into a broken family. It may be the healing of physical ailments or pain or healing of scars left by hurtful words or actions. Sometimes whole communities or nations have a need for healing ..... sometimes the land itself or a place needs God’s healing touch.

Understanding the concept of healing in this way soon makes us see that nearly all people carry hurts of some kind. All of us need God’s healing touch.

The Early Church that we see in the book of Acts was a community where people cared for each other practically, but also a place where they did what Jesus did ..... knowing that they had the Holy Spirit working within them, they prayed that people would be healed.

We are still the Church of Christ on earth .....

We have the same Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts ....

We can still ask our Father God to bless and to heal, in whatever way he chooses ..... as we say your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. He may not do exactly what we ask ..... we cannot tell God what to do ... he knows what we need.... He always responds but may say "wait".

Can just talk about it ..... but God invites us to take him at his word and to ask.....

This morning we want to give an opportunity to you as a whole congregation to come forward and ask for God's healing touch, either for yourself or as you come on behalf of someone else. We will be here at the front and will simply take some oil, blessed by your bishop and make the sign of the cross on your forehead..... a symbolic action used by the church throughout the world to remind us of God's healing presence. If we had more time we would ask you what you would like us to pray for ..... We don't need to know, as God knows what is in your heart, and it is only God who can heal. If that is not something that you want to receive, then simply remain in your seat. But remember, even if you do not want to ask for yourself.... is there someone else you would like to represent. If coming forward is hard for you but you would like us to come to you, tell someone and we will gladly do that. At the end of the service there will be a little more time to pray for individuals if that would be welcomed.

Jesus said, come to me all who are weary and burdened .... And I will refresh you ..... let's take him at his word, day by day in our homes, week by week as we gather as church and let us catch a glimpse of the Kingdom here on earth, just as it is in heaven.