

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. July 3rd 2005

God's Gifts - the Gifts in Practice

The Gift of Healing

Luke 7: 11- 22



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

The theological training Jesus gave his disciples was very different from that given today. Jesus took 12 men and a number of women who joined him on the way as his disciples and over three years they learnt how the blind receive their sight, how the lame can walk again, how those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor. The gift of healing is a sign and an indication of the kingdom of God, present and active in the world today

As we search the Old Testament we find God promising to bring healing and health to his people if they obey him. In Exodus 23 v 25 -26 we read *"Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you... I will give you a full life span."* This is a familiar theme in Deuteronomy 28 and Psalm 41. Indeed, it's in God's character to heal. In Exodus 15:26 he declares *'I am the Lord' who heals you.'*

The OT has several examples of miraculous healing. 1 Kings 13:6 is a striking example when King Jeroboam's withered hand was healed; and in 2 Kings 5 we have the story of Naaman, who was the commander of the King of Aram. Naaman was struck with leprosy and God healed him after he reluctantly dipped himself 7 times in the River Jordan. We read in verse 14 'that his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy'. More striking is Naaman's confession. He is recorded as saying *"Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. As Nicky Gumbel says in his book 'Questions of Life' 'we see from this story that healing can have a remarkable effect on a person's life – not just physically, but also in their relationship with God.'* If God acted in this way in the OT when there were only glimpses of the kingdom of God and the outpouring of the Spirit, then we can confidently expect that he will do so even more, now that Jesus has inaugurated the kingdom of God and the age of the Holy Spirit. The first recorded words of Jesus in Mark's gospel are *'The time has come,' he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* The theme of the Kingdom of God is central to the ministry of Jesus. This expression, together with the kingdom of heaven, is used over 82 times in the NT and its meaning, translated from Aramaic, (which Jesus spoke) to the Greek of the NT, is not only a kingdom, in the sense of a political or geographical realm. It also carries the emphasis of activity – the activity of ruling or reigning and we therefore understand that 'the kingdom of God' means 'the rule and reign of God.'

Jesus demonstrated the rule and reign of God in everything he taught and did, in the words he spoke and in acts of healing and the suppression of evil. You'll find that over a quarter of the gospels is concerned with healing. Mark's gospel starts at pace with examples of healing (cf Mark 1:21-45)

We are called to share in Jesus' ministry. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he declares, *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, We are called to share in his reign here on earth until he comes again. We are called to exercise this same ministry of healing.* (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 7-11 and 1 Cor. 14: 1)



Witness: Questions to discuss

1. Have you or someone you know ever experienced the gift of healing by being prayed for in the name of the Lord Jesus? What was it like, how did you feel and what effect did it have on you faith?
2. Why do we want to see the gift of healing restored to the ministry of the Church?
3. How important is it that physical healing should be linked to our relationship with God?
4. Are you ready as small group to exercise this ministry amongst yourselves?
5. How do you think the ministry of healing should be exercised here at St Pauls?
6. Discuss whether death is our ultimate healing.