

Divine healing still happens

“Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people.” (Mt 4:23)

Jesus Christ’s “sermon on the mount” is located in His preaching the gospel of the kingdom. What is the gospel of the kingdom? Simply put, it is the stunning realization that the flow of divine life is available to all who will begin to trust Jesus Christ. Salvation is a Life. It is the very life of heaven, the very life of God Himself. It enfolds, encompasses, and inflows the body, spirit, mind, and soul of the disciple of Jesus. It is literally eternal life, in that it is the life of the age to come, but received now in our present mode of existence. It is a life merged into the over-arching tender care and guidance of God.

The divine life of God transforms human character. As C.S. Lewis once said, the “new man” is not one that has evolved. Rather, the new man is one in which the very personality of Jesus Christ has taken over the old man we once were. We who trust Jesus are becoming “little Christs.” The Sermon on the Mount is a picture of the mature inner nature of the men and women in whom flows the divine life of Jesus Christ.

So what about divine healing? There is some discussion in the Church as to whether healing is of the essence of the kingdom or simply a “sign” of the kingdom. It seems to me that divine healing is both. It is of the essence of the kingdom in that God is merciful to heal our bodies, minds, and souls. The kingdom now, given our fallen condition, must be of necessity one of repair and restoration. Divine healing is also a sign of the kingdom, in that it directs our attention to the power of God located in the heavens (the space around our bodies). The kingdom of the heavens is one in which we formerly rebellious humans have now willingly placed our future under the direct action of Jesus Christ. We are learning how to live by trusting Jesus, carefully submitting our wills to His will, and finding, as we trust Him, that this invisible power of His kingdom girds us and equips us to do things we could never have done on our own. Such as speaking kindly to those who mistreat us. Such as being still in God when others panic.

However we understand the place of divine healing, we certainly don’t want to dismiss it. Just as Jesus healed “all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people” back then, so he still does today. With all gratitude for doctors, nurses, hospitals, and pharmaceuticals, we who trust Christ want to



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avail ourselves of BOTH “medicine and miracles.”

Now, even more to the point. I’m not sure we must view divine healing as “miracle,” if by that we mean the instant, complete, sudden cure we read about in the gospels. Those events we can properly call “miracles of healing.” Blind people that receive sight, paralyzed men who leap to their feet, dead people who come to life. Such things still occur, but they are rare. However, apart from miracles of healing, there is a whole range of divine healing that Jesus brings about in His kingdom which we should expect as reasonably ordinary and frequent. I would love to see true miracles. I would love to see them all the time. But for good reasons of His own, most of which I don’t understand but still trust Him with, God is sparing with those.

My experience with divine healing is this. Over the years, I have prayed with hundreds of people for their healing. On only one occasion did I witness what I would consider an “instant healing.” That was a time while pastoring in Wilmington when I stepped behind the emergency room curtains to pray for a member of my congregation, who was about to be shocked with the paddles to correct a heart situation. The body language of the robed doctors and nurses communicated their impatience with my presence as they stood waiting for me to finish, the paddles in hand, raised in the air. Laying my hand on the man’s chest, I prayed quickly for the Lord to heal him. Feeling a little foolish for stopping the medical team, I turned, went out of the triage area with tears in my eyes, and sat in the waiting room. Moments later, the chaplain came out to see me. “They didn’t need to use the paddles after all,” he said.

One person only, out of many hundreds prayed for, who was instantly healed. That doesn’t seem like a very good percentage, does it? What I have not yet mentioned is that of those other hundreds prayed for, most improved. True, I don’t see miracles of healing when I

pray, but I do see remarkable improvement and unusually rapid recoveries. Coincidence? I don’t believe so. I believe that through prayer and faith in Jesus, we can expect and count on strong measures of healing to flow into our bodies, from the surrounding presence of the kingdom of God, on a regular basis.

Years ago a wise man told me the three words that will save a healing ministry. Those three words are “I don’t know.” Most of the time now I no longer feel the need (as I once did) to try to explain why some healing occurs and some doesn’t. I don’t blame myself, the person seeking healing, or God. Now, if it were a matter of personal holiness and strength of faith, I can think of lots of reasons why healing wouldn’t come. But divine healing doesn’t work on an “if, then” basis. In other words, IF I am good, or faithful, or believing, THEN God must heal. No, Jesus said, God is kind even to the ungrateful and the wicked. The bottom line for me with healing is that I trust that God is good. Based on the example He set with Jesus, I just assume He is willing to heal. So I will ask and trust. And keep asking as necessary. It doesn’t shake my faith anymore when healing doesn’t seem to come. It is always a joy when healing does come, but even that doesn’t surprise me as much as it used to. The kingdom of God is present to us as we trust in Jesus. In His kingdom we can find healing. Like the air which surrounds us is composed of all sorts of things invisible to our eye, such as oxygen, carbon, radiation, water molecules, radio waves, and so on, the kingdom of God which similarly surrounds our bodies is composed of divine strength, peace, joy, righteousness, love, forgiveness, deliverance, and healing. We can gently receive the flow of this divine life as we trust Jesus.

My only suggestion is to not couch your prayers for healing with the phrase, “If it by thy will.” This only serves as an excuse to let us, or God, off the hook if healing doesn’t come. God doesn’t need us to let him off the hook, and we can get over any embarrassment about what others might think if “our” prayers aren’t answered.

God is good. Jesus has assured us that our Father knows what things we have need of BEFORE we ask Him—so, of course, ask and expect to receive!

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