

“PORTRAITS OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE (#3):  
THE HEALING MINISTRY OF JESUS”

(Luke 8:40-48)

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[East Cobb U.M.C.; 3-27-11 AM]

-I-

1. [Traditional Service ONLY] Read Text: Luke 8:40-48 and Pray.
2. It was February 1987. I was a Junior at LaGrange College, excited about a flight out of town to visit a friend over the weekend.

A–But, the day I was to scheduled to leave, I came down with some kind of sickness that knocked me off my feet.

1–I thought about not going, but being a college student (lacking basic common sense), I decided to go anyway, even though I felt awful.

2–After struggling through security and check in at the Atlanta airport, I boarded my plane and sat down in my seat, essentially “bummed” about my physical condition.

3–But before taking off, I said a simple prayer as I looked out the airplane window:  
*“Lord, if you can, heal me of whatever this is.”*

B–Now, you’ve got to understand that even though I’d been a Christian for 6-7 years, I had no use whatsoever for what I considered to be the gimmicks and manipulative tricks of so-called faith-healers, and certainly wasn’t about to claim such nonsense for myself!

C–But you know, even though there’d been no drama to my prayer, no heavenly choir singing the “Hallelujah Chorus,” and nobody had thumped my head to be “slain in the Spirit,” about a day later I realized that even though I hadn’t thought about that prayer, I’d felt fine ever since getting off the plane.

3. So, this experience wasn’t flashy or dramatic – there was no miraculous disappearance of cancer or a tumor (although since then I’ve known people to whom that’s happened) – but I also can’t deny the results.

A–And you might say, *“Well, Brian, that was no miracle. It was just a virus that ran its course – so, your ‘healing’ was just a coincidence.”*<sup>1</sup>

1–Well, maybe. But I’ve come to learn that sometimes “coincidences” are merely God’s way of disguising his work from those who aren’t yet ready to receive it.

2–Somebody once said that *“Just because the tracks don’t come by your house doesn’t mean there aren’t trains!”*

3–You see, here was someone (me) who really didn’t believe in the supernatural power of healing, but who God chose to heal anyway!

B—Now, maybe at some point in your life you yourself have received a healing miracle from God. Maybe you’ve seen or heard about it in the lives of others. Or maybe you’ve been (or still are) like I was: ...a skeptic of such things.

4. Well, whatever your experience, this “*Healing Ministry of Jesus*” is what I want to talk about today as we continue our sermon series called Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

A—Today’s story is from Luke 8, and in many ways it merely represents the *many* New Testament stories which describe Jesus’ ministry of healing.

[Contemp. Service ONLY: Let me read it to you... Read MSG of Luke 8:40-48]

B—Let’s remember that since Luke himself was a Physician,<sup>2</sup> it’s not surprising that we find more references to and stories about Jesus’ healings in *his* gospel than in any other book in the New Testament (1/3 of all the N.T. healing stories are found in Luke).<sup>3</sup>

C—Obviously, Luke wanted us to understand the important and vital role that healing played in the life and ministry of Jesus. (*Follow along in Bulletin sermon notes*)

–II–

5. For example, these healing stories from Luke teach us something not only about **THE MANY FORMS & METHODS THAT JESUS USED, but also THAT WE’RE TO USE** as we share His healing ministry with others. Consider, for example...

A—Sometimes Jesus used *touch* to heal people.<sup>4</sup> In other cases, he merely *spoke*,<sup>5</sup> and in still other cases, he did *both* to bring about healing.<sup>6</sup>

1—Sometimes the one healed was *right there* with Jesus (like in today examples).<sup>7</sup> At other times, people were healed even though they were *somewhere else*, and had only sent word about their need.<sup>8</sup>

2—Sometimes Jesus showed empathy and compassion to persons by *talking* with them and *listening* to their pains and hurts *before* healing them.<sup>9</sup> At other times people were healed by Jesus *before they ever said a word* or even *asked* for the healing (like the women in today’s story).<sup>10</sup>

3—Jesus gave healing to *religious people*, like Jairus in today’s scripture (the leader of the local synagogue).<sup>11</sup> But he also gave healing to *non-religious people*, like this woman (who because of the nature of her illness probably hadn’t attended synagogue for over 12 years).<sup>12</sup>

4—In Luke’s healing stories, sometimes the one being healed had *faith* (again like this woman in Verse 48).<sup>13</sup> But in other stories, we have *no indication* that the recipient had *any* faith whatsoever, and that faith instead was found in friends or relatives (as with Jairus’ faith in Verse 41).<sup>14</sup>

5—When Jesus healed, sometimes the effects were *instantaneous*.<sup>15</sup> Other times, healing took effect only *over a period of time*, occasionally even requiring several “installments” (if you will).<sup>16</sup>

6—What’s more is that when people came to Jesus for *physical* healing, many times he instead gave them what they *really* needed... *spiritual* healing.<sup>17</sup> And at other times, people seeking *spiritual* healing were given *physical* healing, as well.<sup>18</sup>

7—And if we widen our examples to include the healing stories found in other parts of the New Testament, we find Jesus and his followers not only ministering *physical and spiritual* healing to others, ...

8—...but also *emotional* healing,<sup>19</sup> healing of *fears and doubts*,<sup>20</sup> of *relationships*,<sup>21</sup> and even *physical death*<sup>22</sup> – all as forms of God’s healing power at work.<sup>23</sup>

B—My point in all of this is that you and I can’t put God’s healing power in a box and expect it to work the same for every person and every situation just because it worked that way for us, or for somebody we saw on TV!

C—No. Just as Jesus healed in differing ways, so he heals today in differing ways, and uses *us* to heal *others* in a variety of ways and forms, as well.

1—For example, some of the most effective “healing ministers” I know are doctors, nurses, medical lab technicians, hospital “pink ladies”, secretaries, receptionists, counselors, public school teachers, and retirees.

2—In fact, *anyone* willing to offer the compassion and empathy *of* Jesus to others can be a “healing minister” *for* Jesus to others.

3—And this means that every time we as Christians pray for someone’s health, salvation, relationships, or for their general well-being (their *shalom*), then we’re participating in the healing ministry of Jesus.

4—Every time we show compassion by listening to and empathizing with others (like our Stephen Ministers or Prayer Ministers), every time we visit someone who can’t get out (like our Homebound minister), and every time we give someone hug after a hard day, we’re participating in the healing ministry of Jesus.<sup>24</sup>

6. Now, I don’t presume to understand how all this works.<sup>25</sup> But, I don’t fully understand how my computer works either!

A—And yet, just as we don’t have to understand how a computer works in order to use it, so we don’t have to fully understand the healing ministry of Christ in order to be either a recipient of it ourselves, or a conduit of it to others.

B–For that matter, I should add, even if science and medicine does one day discover the “*how*” of certain kinds of healing (how to cure cancer, for instance), that doesn’t in any way negate a belief in God as the *source* of that healing, any more than me knowing how a computer works negates the fact that *someone* created it to work that way in the first place – after all, science *exists* to answer *HOW*; but faith exists to answer *WHO/WHY*.

C–My point is that every person of faith is called to be part of Jesus’ ministry of healing and wholeness today<sup>26</sup> – it’s *not* just for ordained pastors or charismatic faith-healers, but for *all of us* who claim to follow Christ....<sup>27</sup>

–III–

7. ...Because the bottom line, you see, is that healing (in all its differing forms... physical, spiritual, emotional, mental, relational, etc.) was central to the ministry of Jesus.

A–And if it was central to him, then “*The Healing Ministry of Jesus*” is not only something that’s available today for *us*, but it’s also something we’re to pass on to *others*, as well.

B–[**PRAY**: “*O Jesus, lover of our souls: Whatever our hurt; whatever our brokenness; whatever our pain... Heal us and make us whole for you, that we might be vessels of your healing for others. In your holy name we pray, Amen.*”]

8. [HOLY COMMUNION & PRAYERS & ANOINTING FOR HEALING AT ALTAR]
9. [TRADITIONAL SERVICE SUGGESTED CLOSING HYMN: #375, “There Is A Balm In Gilead”]
10. [ANNOUNCE BEFORE BENEDICTION: “*Invite all to read and share with others the brochure “Biblical Presuppositions about Healing and Wholeness” – printed copies in Narthex or read and download online from my blog ([www.pastorbriang.blogspot.com](http://www.pastorbriang.blogspot.com))*”]

**ENDNOTES:**

1. Such attitudes may have something to do with the fact that our contemporary society is largely based (at least at first glance) upon logic and reasonableness. And since “miracles” (such as healings) don’t fit into those neat categories of logic/reasonableness, the assumption is that they must not be true -- there must instead be some rational explanation. Hence, persons with this perspective on life then to view supernatural “healings” with skepticism, derision, or even contempt.

Yet, just because something doesn’t make logical sense to US doesn’t mean there is no logic to it. I once heard a pastor explain that a “miracle” is defined as “*something which cannot be understood or explained by humankind, but which is perfectly normal to God*” (Dr. Reynolds Greene, North Georgia Conference Pastor and evangelist).

2. Read Colossians 4:14.

3. Luke, in fact, is the source of over 1/3 of all the healing stories of Jesus found in the entire New Testament! The New Testament records 46 times when individuals are identified as being the recipients of Jesus’ healing ministry, and another 8 times where “many” or “or “all who were there” are referred to as being healed by Jesus. Of this total of 54 stories, Matthew records 14, Mark 17, and John only 4 – but Luke

records 19 stories of Jesus healing others. Luke also records several healing stories not found in any of the other gospels (e.g., Luke 22:51). I believe that this emphasis of Jesus is built upon three basic assumptions:

(#1) **Healing and Wholeness is at the very heart of God's intention for humanity.** In fact, the Greek and Hebrew words used in the Bible which we translate into English as “*salvation, saved, to heal,*” and “*to be at peace*” all have the same root. They can all be best translated as “wholeness/completeness” – hence, to be “saved/to have peace/to be healed” all mean to be “whole and complete.” In Genesis 1-3, God creates humanity in His whole image, yet sin causes us to be broken and separated from that image. Jesus came, however, that we might once again be “whole/healed” in mind, body, soul, and spirit (Read Genesis 1:27 and John 10:10). Perhaps that’s precisely why roughly 1/3 of the gospel stories are devoted to Jesus’ earthly ministry of healing. As a consequence of this first assumption,...

(#2) **All Healing is from God.** Healing does not come from the power of a particular preacher, doctor, nurse, or well-intentioned “prayer warrior.” God may *use* such persons as vessels/tools through which God’s healing power flows and/or acts, but *God* is the only true healer. We can *cooperate* with His healing, but it is ultimately not *ours* to control. Read Psalm 103:2-4 and Hebrews 11:6. This of course leads us to a third presumption,...

(#3) **All sickness is from the realm of evil.** This does *not* mean that *our personal* evil or sins necessarily cause *our* sickness, or even that the “devil/Satan” is to blame for all of it (sometimes we give the devil more credit than he’s due), but merely that since we live in a world which is permeated everywhere by sin (some created by us, some by others), we must sometimes reap the consequences of living in the fallen world in which we exist (a world populated by germs, disease, and natural disasters). For example, then, there is sickness in our world today *not* because “somebody sinned,” but because the sin in our world has shattered the wholeness and completeness which God intended for each of us to have from the beginning. As has often been said, “*God often allows what God doesn’t will,*” but this *doesn’t* imply that God causes sickness or illness.

4. For example: Luke 4:40 and 22:51.
5. For example: Luke 4:31-39; 5:17-26; 6:6-10; 8:26-39; 9:37-43; 17:11-19; and 18:35-43.
6. For example: Luke 5:12-16; 7:11-15; and 13:10-13.
7. For example: Luke 4:31-41; 5:12-26; 6:6-10; 7:11-15; 8:26-39; 9:37-43; and 22:51.
8. For example: Luke 13:10-13 and 17:11-19.
9. For example: Luke 5:12-16; 8:26-56; and 18:35-43.
10. For example: Luke 5:17-26; 6:6-10; 13:10-13; and 22:51.
11. For example: Luke 4:38-39 and 8:40-42, 49-56.
12. For example: Luke 4:31-37; 5:12-16; 6:6-10; 8:26-39, 43-48; 14:1-6; 17:11-19; and 22:51.
13. For example: Luke 5:12-16; 7:36-50; 8:48; 17:11-19; and 18:35-43.
14. For example: Luke 4:31-38; 5:17-28; 6:6-10; 7:11-15; 8:41; 9:37-43; 13:10-13; 14:1-6; and 22:51.
15. For example: Luke 4:31-41; 5:12-38; 6:6-10; 7:11-15; 8:26-39; 9:37-43; 13:10-13; 14:1-6; 14:1-6; 18:35-43; and 22:51.
16. For example: Luke 17:11-19, and Mark 8:22-25.

17. Consider the Luke 5:17-26 story of the paralytic who was let down through the roof to be physically healed? Remember that in Jesus' words to him in Verse 20 ("*Rise, your sins are forgiven*"), there is no mention of physical healing, but merely of a *spiritual* healing (i.e., forgiveness). Perhaps this is reminding us that some people can't be physically or emotionally healed until they get their lives straight with God. In fact, whenever we engage in "intercessory prayer" (prayer for others), we've been engaging in prayers for spiritual healing. I've even heard it said that spiritual healing is not so much a *separate form* of healing as it is an integral element of ever *other* form (i.e., physical, emotional, relational, etc.), because *every* healing is a type of spiritual healing in some form or another. Read also Luke 4:31-37; 5:17-28; 8:26-39; 9:37-43; John 5:14; and James 5:16.

18. Physical healing involves primarily the health of our physical bodies so that we might serve God more effectively. Consider, for example, Luke 4:38-39; 4:40-44; 5:12-14; 6:6-10; 7:11-17; 8:26-39; 9:37-43; 13:10-13; Matthew 9:1-13; Mark 1:29-34 and 5:21-43; Acts 3:1-10). But remember, too, that "*all physical healing is temporary at best.*" In our quest for healing, we should not forget that healing of the physical body is *not* the highest goal that we should be praying for or even seeking, and it is certainly not the *only* form/type of healing from God. Consequently, even when God does *not* answer a prayer for physical healing, there's no need for despair or discouragement, but should instead encourage us to look for the deeper, more meaningful, and ultimately more lasting form of healing that God has in store for us.

19. For example: Luke 6:18-19 and 7:36-50; plus Mark 1:21-28 and 5:1-20. I believe this is one of the most desperate needs in our society today, because there are so many people tied up by and in bondage to emotionally unhealthy attitudes like bitterness, unforgiveness, grief, and unresolved anger. If we don't ask God to heal us of these, they will eventually destroy us.

20. For example, in times of illness and tragedy, the fear of pain, loneliness, and/or grief for ourselves or for others is often overwhelming. Even when we have great Christian faith, fear can often get the best of us. Yet, consider examples of the healing of fear in the following passages: Romans 8:15; 1 John 4:16-19.

21. We are a society experiencing rampant divorce, family estrangement, sexual abuse, child abuse, and so on. Perhaps more than at any other time, we need to be healed of our broken relationships with one another. Read Luke 9:42; Ephesians 2:13-18 and 4:1-3; and Hebrews 12:12-14.

22. For example: John 11:25-26; Romans 14:7-9. Physical death is the *only* form of healing that we're all *guaranteed* to receive eventually. Remember, all physical healing is temporary at best (notice that *none* of those who were healed by Jesus physically are still around today!). Death, then, is the ultimate healing: only through death and dying can any person (Christian or not) realize their complete wholeness which God created them originally to have. So then, for the Christian at least, death is merely the transition to a new chapter/stage in the life of their spirit.

23. Consider also other types/forms of God's healing: **Financial** healing (3 John 2), **Mental** healing (Matthew 9:32-35), healing of a **Nation** (2 Chronicles 7:14), and healing **From Violence** (Luke 22:51).

24. In fact, any time you or I as Christians do or say anything that seeks to bring about wholeness in and for others, we're participating in the healing ministry of Jesus.

25. Along this lines, some may ask: "*Why isn't everybody healed in the way they desire or request?*" The answer is:... we don't know, and the Bible doesn't tell us! Perhaps we're not supposed to know, lest we think of ourselves as a god. Perhaps it's one of those aspects of faith that God chooses to remain a mystery to us for now. The Bible *does* teach us this much, however: ***if someone is not healed physically...***

(#1) it is ***NOT because of the recipient's lack of faith*** (sometimes we'll hear people say, "*You just don't have enough faith*" but God's healing power is *not* dependent upon *our* faith; God is sovereign, and

can heal anybody He wants, regardless of faith level!);

(#2) it is ***NOT because God loves the healed person more than one not healed*** (God doesn't play favorites; we are *all* His children, and He desires wholeness for *each* of us).

26. Notice I called it “*Jesus’* ministry of healing.” Sometimes I’ll hear preachers, televangelists, or other Christians talk about *their own* or someone else’s great “healing ministry.” But I would argue that if they have such a ministry at all, it is not *theirs*, but *God’s*! God is the healer; *we* are merely the vessels/tools that He uses to bring it about!

27. For example, read Luke 9:1-6, where Jesus himself sends his disciples out into the surrounding communities to not only preach but to *heal* in his name. We find this same commission carried out by the disciples throughout Luke’s *second volume* (the book of Acts), where we find at least 11 references to the Apostles healing others in the name of Jesus.