



image from: <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20201006-why-touch-matters-more-than-ever-in-the-time-of-covid-19>

July 11th, 2021

Miracles VI / The Touch that Raises and Releases Us

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WORSHIP GUIDE

Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, candles, something to write on and with, your computer/connected device (if you intend to listen to music online), etc. Feel free to adapt this worship guide in any way that makes best sense to you and those you might be gathered with. (Consider inviting someone – a friend, a family member – to worship with you.) Commit to spending the next hour with God.

PRELUDE - Listen and sing along to a song or hymn that blesses and centers your spirit!

WELCOME – *((based on Psalm 98, John 15:9-17 by Bruce Prewer))*

Here today there is love, freely available to all.
Not our human loving, fragile and intermittent,
but God's supreme love.

**May a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth,
break forth into joyous songs of praise.**

Here today is love, higher than our loftiest hopes,
deeper than the immensities of time and space,
God's inclusive love.

**Let the seas roar their praise,
and everything in them.**

**Let the rivers clap their hands
and the hills sing together their happiness.**

The joy of the living Christ Jesus be with you all.
And also with you.

OPENING PRAYER -

Your love, O God, is broad like beach and meadow,
Wide as the wind,
And our eternal home.

That is what we sing and that is what we hold dear.

Yet, we confess, there are days when your love seems impossibly distant, unreachable, elusive. There are days when we find ourselves paralyzed, unable to reach out to you or to others, unable to help ourselves, on the edge of giving up. There are days when everything simply feels too big and too heavy.

Open us in those moments to trust and recognize that you are still with us, still loving us, still seeking our healing and wholeness.

Open us in those moments to the love that comes through our family, friends, and even strangers.

Like the paralytic in the scriptures, open us to be carried by others.

And may we, in turn, be always ready, always willing, always open to carrying others into your healing presence.

We pray in the mighty and loving name of God. Amen.

OPENING HYMN - Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole, URW 160

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMjfHrGzdxI>

In your love, make us whole

May we rest in your compassion

On the long, weary stroll,

In the warmth of your love,

may your peace fill our hearts

May we know the love of Jesus.

By your grace, you console,

make us holy, make us whole.

SCRIPTURE - Mark 2:3-5, 11 / NRSV

³ Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

¹¹ “I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.”

This is the Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

LISTEN - *During our current worship series, members of the Healing Prayer Team are sharing their insights on the scripture story and their faith experiences with us. Today, Joyce Simmonds shared her story.*

“Borrowing faith” – when you can’t do it yourself, in times of great stress and doubt

Who was this paralyzed man? I don’t know, but his wonderful friends went to great lengths to help him. They carried him to the house, climbed up on the roof and hauled him up there, dug a hole in the roof, and lowered him down into the crowds around Jesus.

How determined they were. The scripture says “...when Jesus saw their faith” He healed this man. Wow. This man’s healing did not depend on his own faith. There need be no fear or debate

about whether your faith is good enough.... it is irrelevant. There is no opportunity to “not feel good enough” that might prevent you from praying for healing.

In her book, Flora Wuellner talks about times when we want to turn to God, and need help, but cannot move. Cannot summon the will and energy to do something positive for ourselves.

We do not know if the paralyzed man had asked for help – was he even capable of talking?

Some people who have nearly died, or have been unconscious for a long time, later say how deeply aware they were of the love and strength from those around them. When Flora is enduring tough times, she thinks of those people and how we are not alone in our struggle, even though it may appear so.

She says: At these times I contact one or two trusted friends and ask them to carry me in prayer. Our church can do this for each other, and for others. You all did it for me. After I was diagnosed with cancer, I came to Twin Towers and borrowed your faith. People I didn't yet know prayed for me. Their prayers and presence were with me as I walked slowly, but steadily, through the storm of my cancer diagnosis and treatment. And God walked beside me.

Sometimes, we need help from those around us to get us on our feet and doing what needs to get done.

As a small example, a few months after surgery and radiation completed, I slipped into depression, which, cruelly, happens to many people and seems bizarre when you're expecting you'll feel better, and return to normal. I struggled, and felt highly undeserving. I knew I needed to join an Alameda gym, instead of the one in San Leandro where I worked, as I just was not finding the energy and time to get there. For a few weeks, I could not get myself to act on it, but I knew I needed to ask my husband to take me to visit his gym on Park Street. Why did it take me weeks to ask him?? When at last I managed to, he took me the next day. I found the gym seemed ok, and I thought I could manage coming there, and did so, thankfully.

Similarly, Flora talks of a woman who had sunk into depression, but did not know why. She could not help herself. But her family did. They made appointments and took her to a doctor and a therapist. It turned out she had underactive thyroid (hence the extreme fatigue) and childhood emotional wounds that were surfacing. She got thyroid medication and worked with her therapist and began to pray.

Her prayers were simple, and sometimes had no words at all, but were a sense of God's loving care enfolding her. Later, much recovered, she said “It was God through my family who carried me out of that dark despair”.

There are some questions Flora asks to help us in dark times (p 66):

1. What faithful persons in your lives have been present to give you their strength when you had none?
2. Has help come from the beauty and power of nature?
3. Did God touch us through a special book, music, art, or a beloved companion animal?

For each of these, my answers are:

1. Faithful persons: My husband, my therapist, Pastor Emily, my surgeons and nurses, all of you, and my friends outside church – I had help and prayers from all of you– bless you and thank you.
2. Nature: I started painting again. Something I used to do before having kids. Today, I paint almost every day – paintings of trees, animals and nature. It brings me peace.
3. Music: Just over a year ago, just two weeks before my major jawbone surgery, I took up the saxophone. I'd been playing the clarinet for 4 months, but had no other musical experience besides the recorder I played when I was 10. Now, I LOVE playing the saxophone and have 3 of them!!

To help us turn to God in our dark times, Flora has the Prayer of Rope's End (p67):

God, this is too big for me. Take over. Take over all the way.
I give myself to your strong heart.
Lift me, pray for me, enfold me. Amen.

This prayer reminds me of the prayer I wrote during my own dark times – probably when I had the tracheotomy and the arm that looked like it belonged in a horror movie. Or maybe during the agonizing period of scans and doctor visits to figure out just how bad this cancer was and what the treatment would be – it was stage 3, my doctors told me.

Prayer for the Desperate

Dear God
Here I am, desperate and afraid.
I open myself to you, who can do anything, and heal anything.
I ask you to be with me, and to give me comfort.
Thank you for your presence, when all other options desert me.
There is nothing else that can reach me at times like this.
Amen.

As I walked through the storm – sometimes not able to see my foot stepping out in front of me, I leaned on all your strength and prayers, whether you're aware of that or not. You kept me going. We can all do this for each other, as conduits of the Holy Spirit and Jesus healing power. I believe Jesus wants us to. I believe it is one of his dearest wishes that we do.

SONG OF RESPONSE/MEDITATION - You Raise Me Up / Josh Groban

Watch and Listen here: <https://youtu.be/LC1NC26Ja10>

HEALING PRAYER EXPERIENCE - Give yourself a quiet time in a safe space with these intentions:

- *To invite a meaningful and healing prayer experience*
- *To encounter Jesus through prayer*

Sit comfortably with your feet firmly planted on the ground, resting on the underlying strength of God. You are encouraged to close your eyes and to take a few slow, deep breaths. Feel your breath fill your lungs and flow out again. Everyth breath is God's Spirit breathing into you.

When you feel ready, recall a time when you were so tired, depressed, or confused that you could not make choices or do anything to help yourself. / Think of a time when even prayer seemed too much of an effort, a time when your inner strength was gone. / Perhaps you might remember a time when you felt powerless in just one aspect of your life. / What happened? Did someone reach out to you? Did someone or something give you strength until you could move again, reach out, stand on your feet, and make choices?

As you reflect on that time, do you feel God was reaching out and touching you through those helpers? Did help come in some other way? Did God's Spirit come directly and carry you?

Rest quietly, and give grateful thanks for the help that came, in whatever form it arrived.

Might you be feeling a sense of powerlessness in any part of your life right now or in the days ahead? Is there some area in your life in which you cannot seem to move, change or make choices even if you want to? Share with God now how you are feeling.

When you are ready, ask God to take over that part of your life, to take over your whole life and carry you with the power of the Holy Spirit, to pray in you and for you. Ask God to send you others who will share their strength with you for a while until your strength returns. Now rest in God, knowing that help and empowerment are already enfolding you, that this present moment and any future moments are held in God's healing hands and heart.

Close with Flora Wuellner’s “Prayer of the Rope’s End” (p. 67), a prayer you can pray at any time:

God, this is too big for me. Take over. Take over all the way. I give myself to your strong heart. Lift me, pray for me, enfold me.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE – *Spend time in prayer. What did you hear for yourself through today’s scripture and reflection? Talk to God about it. Then lift up the joys and concerns that are in your heart. You might write them down, speak them aloud, or pray for them in silence.*

We would be honored to pray with you and for you.

Please send a note via text, mail, or email or give a call to our Healing Prayer Team.

SHARING OUR GIFTS– *How might you offer yourself and all that you have to God this week? How are you being invited to practice generosity? Spend a moment listening for God’s direction.*

You are invited to contribute financially towards the purpose and ministry of TTUMC. We are a congregation committed to being conduits of God’s healing in our neighborhood and beyond, and in so doing, impact the last and the least. You can contribute by mailing in a check, dropping off cash, or giving online (visit www.twintowersumc.org). Take a moment and do that now.

CLOSING HYMN - “He Touched Me” UMH 367,

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MmEbcU7LKg>

Shackled by a heavy burden,
neath a load of guilt and shame,
then the hand of Jesus touched me,
and now I am no longer the same.

Refrain:

He touched me, O he touched me,
and O the joy that floods my soul!

Something happened, and now I know,
he touched me and made me whole.

2. Since I met this blessed Savior,
since he cleansed and made me whole,
I will never cease to praise him;
I’ll shout it while eternity rolls.

BENEDICTION - (Source: *Rev Dr Garry Deverell*)

May God go before, to show us the way; May God shine above, to lighten our world; May God lie beneath, to bear us up; May God go beside, to companion our journeys. AMEN

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!

NEXT WEEK'S SCRIPTURE: John 20:19-22

This week's news and notes:

- **Join the Fire Bucket Challenge!** Fire season is on its way and we have been challenged to assemble **50 Fire Buckets on August 1st** for use by our Annual Conference's Disaster Response Ministry. We have entered this challenge with our sister churches Chinese Community, Lake Merritt, and Lake Park UMCs. Here are 3 important links you'll need to participate:
 1. For more information about the fire buckets, links to suggested places to purchase items, etc., visit <https://www.cnumc.org/fire-buckets>
 2. To sign up to donate items needed for fire buckets, visit <https://tinyurl.com/FireBucketDonationsSignUp>
 3. To RSVP to assemble fire buckets on Aug. 1st at 1:30 p.m., visit <https://tinyurl.com/RSVP4BucketAssembly>

All items will be dropped off at Lake Merritt UMC on August 1st between 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

- **I am Away** - Our family has traveled to the East Coast to scatter Mom's ashes this week. I will return on the 14th. While away, I will not be checking email. To share a prayer request or need, please connect with Leigh Miller, liaison to our Healing Prayer Team. For any pastoral emergencies, please connect with P. Michael Yoshii.

Peace & Grace,
Emily