



Photo from Photographer Joanne hall

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Miracles VII / The Eyes that Find and Free 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 – From *The Abingdon Worship Annual*

In a world of pain and trouble, we need a place to heal.

Here and now, we have come into the presence of God our healer.

God is our rock and our refuge.

We seek liberation from all that constricts us,

healing from all that keeps us bent over,

Release from all that blocks our way to the fullness of life.

God is our rock and our refuge.

Let the old and the aging, the young and the innocent,

the confused and the lost, turn to the Lord in hope.

God is our rock and our refuge.

OPENING PRAYER -

God, our rock and refuge, you have loved us before we ever knew it,
and continue to love us still.

We come before you as a people longing to love you in return.

We pray for an overflow of your healing love in our lives,
for we desire to love your world, ourselves and our neighbors.

Come to us this day and fill our longing.

In the name of the one who walked the way of love, Jesus the Christ. 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 - Luke 13:10-13

¹⁰ Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹ And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” ¹³ When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.

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, Leigh Miller shared her story.*

Today’s scripture story stands in contrast with most, if not all, of the other healing stories we have reflected on during this series. This is not a healing story about someone who brings their hurt or brokenness to Jesus, by crying out loudly (like Bartimaeus or the disciples on the storm-lashed boat), or by reaching out in desperation to touch Jesus (like the hemorrhaging woman), or through the care and support of friends (like the paralytic we read about last week). Today’ scripture story involves a healing of someone who *Jesus* notices, who *he* sees, and without her saying a word, initiates healing. In other words, the healing comes out of nowhere, at least from the perspective of the woman who is healed. Today’s scripture story is about how, as Flora Wuellner puts it, “sometimes the transforming Presence heals us, changes us, when we are expecting nothing, asking for nothing.” In other words, you are going about your life when suddenly everything changes. Imagine that for a moment: Not expecting anything from God, not asking for anything, maybe not even realizing you were in need or want of healing. Have you ever had an experience like this?

Wuellner writes with amazing insight to this scripture passage and so I want to read from chapter 7 starting starting on page 70:

“Luke’s story of the bent-over woman implies that she also was expecting nothing. She had been crippled for 18 years and probably took her condition for granted by now. This was just the way things were, her everyday reality. She had not asked Jesus for healing, and, unlike the paralyzed man, apparently had no faithful friend who believed Jesus could help her. The whole

community took her condition for granted. There was no taint of shame or contamination as with the bleeding woman; She was just part of the village's everyday reality.

The story says the woman appeared. Had she been standing in the women's section of the synagogue, and Jesus suddenly noticed her? Had she hobbled in late? Or was she perhaps walking slowly past the open door? Whatever the case, his compassionate eyes found her, and he called her to come to him. Undoubtedly this shocked everyone. The setting was not, after all, a private home or a street corner. It was in a synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus was upfront preaching from the scriptures during a solemn hour that was sacred to God. But then suddenly he interrupted himself to call a woman to come through the crowd of men to the front of the synagogue. He was breaking every tradition in an appallingly public way.

The woman hobbled forward, probably trying to avoid the outraged eyes around her. Why had he called her? Had she done something wrong? What was going to happen?

Jesus touched her and spoke with gentle authority:” Lady, you are set free from your ailment. " Did she feel a sudden onrush of new strength? Or did she notice a sudden change in her body, an impossible change? It was Jesus who touched her, but it was *she* who straightened herself up.

For the first time in years she could take a deep breath from uncramped lungs. For the first time she could lift her arms high, throw back her head in the ancient posture of praise, and cry out in Thanksgiving to God.” Even though scripture doesn't tell us what Jesus had been teaching when the woman arrived, Flora Wuellner thinks it could have been Isaiah 35: 5-7

*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For water shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water.*

This radiant vision, this compassionate power, reveals the God who longs to set us free, to release us, to make us whole.

As with so many other of his acts of healing, Jesus not only set free this woman's body but also her spirit.

Does the unexpected releasing touch of God come to us today? Has a door in our inner prisons of the spirit, which we have sadly believed to be our only reality, suddenly, unexpectedly been opened?"

I had an experience where God straightened my crippled soul, not all at once, but in a series of events. I found myself jobless for the first time in my career. I was living in a condo, with two of my three daughters. My daughter Raquel was 25 at the time, but having a hard time launching into adulthood. She had chosen a career as a hairstylist and was talented at her work. Unfortunately, she didn't seem to have much of a drive to build her clientele. She was living with me rent free, so didn't have the motivation to really push herself. This caused me great frustration, and all of my suggestions fell on deaf ears. When I lost my job, changes had to occur. After 7 weeks went by, I ended up getting a job at Highland Hospital in Oakland where they were building a brand-new Cardiac Catheterization Lab. This meant that it would be necessary for me to move to Oakland so that I could respond to emergency calls in a timely manner. I found an apartment, and Raquel started her journey into adulthood. She and her sister found a roommate to share the rent, and I found that I could breathe for the first time in my adult life! I didn't fully understand the weight that I had been carrying until I was led to move away from home! I had been a single mother for 20 years with all of life's challenges falling to my shoulders.

Flora Wuellner reminds us that "there are so many ways of being trapped, constricted, bent over. It is not God's will, as we see through Jesus, that we remain in that condition." Wuellner writes, "Jesus was keenly aware of the world's hunger and pain. He had far more to say about that than he did about sin....Many church liturgies and much spiritual teaching still emphasize sin but say little about the burden of unhealed suffering; the prisons of unrelenting grief, shame, fear; the generations of wounded families projecting their burdens on the next generations; the hurt, anger and fear among races and nations."

The author challenges us with these closing questions: "How can we help one another to see the pain as Jesus saw the bent-over woman? How can we learn to name what we see and to bring the crushing burdens to God's heart and hands? How do we begin with our own pain and inner prisons? If we, as wounded healers, are not aware of our own wounds, our own constricting burdens -if we are not being healed and released, we will invariably inflict more suffering on those we wish to help; We will pull others into our inner prisons. How can we best respond when God's eyes find us, fasten on our burden, and God calls us to come closer?"

Those are indeed challenging and profound questions, aren't they? Take any one and we could sit in prayer for a lifetime. I remember several weeks ago when Brian Stewart was teaching Sunday school, he said something like, "hurt people hurt people." But what if we do not even realize we

are carrying around wounds and brokenness? What if we do not see our need for healing and transformation? Perhaps it is not too strong to say that we become free-flowing conduits of God's healing when we are open and committed to our own healing, willing to look with God at our own lives. At the beginning of the book, Wuellner writes, "learning to care - to feel compassion and responsibility - is the deep soul unfolding through which God's realm, God's will, becomes increasingly manifested on earth." Our call and our work is to help each other to care...but caring begins with seeing one another, seeing ourselves, seeing others as Jesus did. May we go into the coming week open and committed to God's work of healing in us and through us. May we go into the coming week anticipating unexpected healing. Amen.

SONG OF RESPONSE/MEDITATION - Chainbreaker / Zach Williams

watch and listen: <https://youtu.be/JGYjKR69M6U>

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 in God's presence. 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, ask God to show you if there is a constriction in your life. Do you feel bent over, cramped, held in, or held down in any way? Do you feel unfree, bound, trapped?

Look quietly with God at this inner prison, this heavy burden (at what God might show you, at what comes up). Put into words what you feel and name it to God (You can do so in a journal or in the quiet of your heart.)

Where do you feel your burden comes from? A relationship? A commitment? The work you are doing? Your family? A childhood hurt or dysfunction? Maybe you can't tell where it comes from nor why you feel it.

Reflect on Jesus' words at the beginning of his ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me...to proclaim release to the captives...to let the oppressed go free."
(Luke 4:18)

The Christ who sets us free is with you now. God wants to free you, to release you into new life, to open the prison door, to take your heaviness off you.

God calls you closer. If you feel ready, give to God's heart your inner burden or constriction - whatever you feel traps or binds you.

In the coming days, be open to changes that will surely come. They may be outer changes in your way of life or your relationships. Or there may be an inner transformation that sets you free. You will straighten yourself up. You will move with empowered freedom again. You will be able to lift your whole self in God's praise.

When you feel ready, take a few deep breaths; lightly massage your face and hands; stretch; and give thanks to God for all that has come to you during this time of prayer, if even just a time for quiet and reflection.

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 - "Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone" W&S 3104,

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXzETuK792E>

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found;
was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear;
and grace my fears relieved.

How precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

Refrain:

My chains are gone, I've been set free.
My God, my Savior, has ransomed me.
And like a flood his mercy reigns,

unending love, amazing grace.

3. The Lord has promised good to me;
his word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

4. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine.
But God who called me here below,
will be forever mine,
will be forever mine.
You are forever mine.

Refrain

BENEDICTION - (*Source: From The Abingdon Worship Annual*)

On the Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue,
and a crippled woman was healed.

Jesus set her free.

After he touched her, she rose up and praised God.

As we depart today, may God set us free.

**May we lead lives worthy of our calling,
and may your praise be always upon our lips.**

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!

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

I share these news and notes:

- **Have you had a chance to read my pastoral letter to you**, the Twin Towers community, regarding our re-opening discernment? I invite your prayers and partnership as we discern our re-opening. While we are not yet ready to offer a firm re-opening date, I wanted to share with you our direction and values.
- Please take a moment to complete [this 3rd and final re-opening community survey](#). Of particular import is the invitation to be a part making our re-opening possible: by becoming a part of our welcome/ushering team and/or our worship tech team. Both of these teams are critical to our ability to safely and easily re-open. We are happy to orient and train any who feel called, willing, and able! Please do complete the survey by **July 25th**.
- **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.

Peace & Grace,
Emily