

MEDITATION 13

Mark 1: 40-42

⁴⁰ A man with a skin disease came to Jesus begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I am willing. Be made clean!" ⁴² Immediately the skin disease left him, and he was made clean.

"A man with a skin disease came to Jesus begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

We can read this passage literally. But here's the problem if we do that. Here's a man who comes to Jesus with an ailment that appears to be physical: a skin disease. He is desperate for healing and relief. He kneels before Jesus begging him for healing. He believes Jesus can heal him. As we will see, he experiences healing in a way that is visible. The problem here is that I, the reader and meditator on these verses am one who has often prayed and begged for healing for myself or someone else, and healing has not happened in a way that is visible. Is this a failure on my part or God's part? Am I doing something wrong or am I not worthy of healing?

But what if we read this and more healing stories to come in a deeper way, not so much as a one-time event, but as part of a journey throughout my life? What if I saw healing as an essential need in my life from beginning to end, through every situation, relationship and struggle physical, mental and spiritual, even as my body grows, ages, ails and dies at one point or another?...

How may we read, meditate and inwardly digest these verses in a deeper, more existential way?...

We know from medical studies about the connection between physical disease, mental trauma and spiritual distress. We know that people in violent war zones over a prolonged period of time, combined with malnutrition and physical duress, develop all kinds of ailments, skin diseases and various digestive, vascular and mental conditions that become chronic and entrenched requiring multi-level healing. This is the context of the majority of Jews in Palestine at the time of Jesus.

But the connection between body, mind and spirit with health is true for all of us too. How is your bodily health, mental health and spiritual health related?... Please do not feel guilty if you are not well... Such questioning is not intended to make you feel flawed or morally compromised. It is intended to open you to a deeper, more holistic understanding of healing that is not just a one condition affair. No doubt, if you've got cancer, for example, healing would have to encompass the cancer in a physical way. Of course. But what if the cancer doesn't leave you? Is that a failure of prayer, failure in God, or failure in yourself in some way? Or, is it an

invitation to understand healing in other ways it may come, even if your body does not fully heal?...

It takes faith to see healing in this deeper way when we are staring death in the face - faith that God is with us and taking us by the hand forward even if resurrection may not fully happen now but must await the new life to come beyond physical life as we know it now... Yes... It takes faith to experience healing within even as our body may be failing...

Prayer: Come to me, O God... Come upon me... Visit those I love with your healing presence... Where may healing come I do not see?... Give me eyes to see... Give me ways to feel and experience the healing... Transform my spirit with faith and hope in the healing power of your love as I live forward in your mercy, grace and healing presence... through your Spirit flowing I pray...

"Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, 'I am willing. Be made clean!'"

Jesus always chooses to heal. He is a gifted healer powered by deep compassion. But in order to heal he needs the person to come forward in faith, asking with persistence. Such asking and seeking is the ground of faith which activates Jesus' healing power.

Have you given up believing in what God through the Spirit that flowed through Christ and now flows through you can yet do that is healing and transforming? Or do you keep praying because this has become an essential part of your spiritual life? We must be bold in our praying and in our believing...

Prayer: I believe, O God... Help my unbelief... I hope in you, O God, and in my praying to you... Help my doubting and sometimes despairing... I love because your love is in me, O God... Help me in my moments of bitterness, self-pity or envy of the good fortune, health and happiness of others... Help me make peace with my life and where I am, even as I also pray for openness to where healing can happen I have yet to experience...

"Jesus said: 'Be made clean!' Immediately the skin disease left him, and he was made clean."

To be made clean... What does this mean?... Clean of what?... Is it the disease and the poison that is in my body, my mind or my spirit?... Is it being made clean of bad thoughts toward myself or others that demean their humanity and my own?...

What toxins of body, mind and spirit are in us that require cleansing?... What specifically are we asking of God in prayer and what specifically are we being called to activate in ourselves to be

and do?... How is healing also about us being awakened and empowered to act ourselves, get the help we need and take the steps we may have been avoiding?...

PRAYER: We want to be clean, O God... Cleanse us... Cleanse us of whatever toxins poison our minds and spirits as much as our bodies... Free us of whatever holds us captive... Empower us to rise up in faith and hope in the power of your love and what it can heal when it is alive and flowing through us...

Cleanse and heal those specific persons in our orbit of concern... May the healing energy of our praying flow through us into others because our compassion is your energy in and through us... Whatever the outcome may be, may healing come...

Healing of the body, yes, O God, but healing also means:

- A healing of the mind through a coming to peace in what is and what will be...
- A healing that is compassion and comfort for those who may be left behind and the memories they will have...
- A healing that is empathy for the suffering of others because of what we have suffered and may be suffering now ourselves and are able to offer to others in solidarity with them...
- A healing of generosity in what we communicate and give to those around us because it warms our hearts to fill theirs with joy, hope and peace to give this way...

Heal us, O God, now, and heal us in what is to come... Heal us in all dimensions of our being... In Jesus' name... Amen.