

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Sunday, August 21, 2022
Scripture: Luke 13:10-17

The Wounded Healer

There is a story about a man who was in an accident and was left paralyzed. He could not speak. He could not move his body except for his pinky finger. Tragically, the ambulance drivers who picked him up at the accident scene thought he was dead. So instead of taking him to the hospital, they drove him to the morgue. As the drivers were wheeling him into the morgue, his little finger began to tap on the gurney. The ambulance drivers didn't hear the tapping. It was then the man began to panic. But just as they started to place him in a refrigerated tray, one of the driver's shouted, "Stop! He's alive!" The other driver responded, "How can you tell?" To which the other man replied, "I see a tear in his eye."

We cannot avoid being painfully wounded at one time or another. The driver knew the man was alive by seeing his tears. We also can recognize that people have wounds in their lives by their tears. For some, the wounds are physical. For others, wounds are emotional, causing paralysis in living each day and some other wounds are spiritual, aching and longing for healing. We do not have to look too deep within ourselves or others to understand that we are all wounded at one level or another.

In fact, we all have something in common with the bent-over woman in today's gospel story. The experience of physical limitation, suffering, or long-term pain are familiar to many of us.

In Luke 4:18 Jesus said in the synagogue, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus not only proclaimed the good news, but he healed those who were sick.

Because Jesus was in the synagogue that day, the woman was hoping Jesus would heal her. She doesn't say anything to Jesus, she doesn't touch his garment; she doesn't disrupt the service. It is Jesus who notices that she is wounded in body, spirit and emotions and stops what he is doing to heal her.

For eighteen years, she had been bent over, unable to straighten herself out. For eighteen years, her eyes were on the ground as she walked. She couldn't see the faces of anyone. She hadn't felt the warmth of the sun on her face in eighteen years. Have you ever seen someone like that? I have. Slowly it becomes more difficult for them to breathe as well as to see.

When the woman was healed by Jesus that day, she stretched out her arms, stood up straight and praised God.

The key moment in the story is when Jesus sees her in the crowd. In the middle of a group of people, Jesus saw this bent-over woman. That is remarkable because everyone was taller than she was, and his view of her would have been blocked. Still, he saw her pain, her woundedness and her need and responded to her. Jesus knows our wounded hearts and lives as well. Jesus is the wounded healer, and he teaches us, as his disciples, how to also be wounded healers.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 the Apostle Paul writes, "All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us."

Paul is clear about God consoling him so that Paul would be able to console others with the same consolation they received from God.

Weakness, suffering and affliction can be used by God to exhibit God's power. God's power can flow through someone's life when they are wounded to help those around them that are also wounded.

Author Henri Nouwen wrote a book entitled **The Wounded Healer** where he describes how we are able to use our wounds to help heal others who are also wounded. He makes the profound claim that "in our own woundedness we can be a source of life for others," or to put it another way, we can become "wounded healers."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "Some Christians stay at the foot of the cross and never climb up on the cross to see what Jesus sees."

This is where being a wounded healer begins—climbing up on the cross to see what Jesus sees and to feel what Jesus feels. But what Jesus sees and feels on the cross is not pleasant. Isaiah 52 and 53 vividly describe the ugly and painful wounds Jesus suffered for us, reminding us of just how wounded we are.

Right here in our midst or in our families, there are some who suffer the wounds of loneliness. There are some we know who are suffering the wounds of depression. There are some we know who are suffering the wounds of misuse and abuse. There are some who suffer the wounds of disease. There are some who suffer the wounds of an unforgiven past.

Each one of us has the gift of being a wounded healer because we have the "gift of compassion and understanding." This is what being a wounded healer is all about. It is about being able to reach out and identify with the wounded and say, "I understand because I have been wounded too. How can I help?"

We can help by listening to others with an understanding, attentive, safe and caring ear. It is also being able to put yourself in the other person's shoes and trying your best to understand where they are coming from and why they are wounded. Many times, in the midst of helping others with their wounds, your wounds begin to heal.

In Ernest Hemingway's novel, **A Farewell to Arms**, he said, "The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places." This is what happens when we become wounded healers, as

well. We become strong at the broken places of our lives. Our wounds begin to heal because they are being used to give comfort and strength to others.

Some years ago, Bette Midler sang a song titled, “***From a Distance.***” The chorus said, “**God is watching us from a distance.**” It is a beautiful song, but it isn’t theologically correct. The cross does not tell me that God watches us from a distance. The cross tells me that God in Christ is right here in the midst of us, carrying the burdens of the world. God in Christ suffers with us in the midst of our woundedness.

We do not worship or follow a God who does not understand what it is like to be wounded. The message of Good Friday and Isaiah 53 is that we have a God who is wounded for us and who is wounded with us, making him the ultimate wounded healer. For God became one of us in Jesus.

This great truth of God being one of us in Jesus shows us up close Matthew 25:40, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these...you did it to me.” In Christ, God became one of us and became wounded like us. Jesus knew the pain the bent-over woman felt for eighteen years.

Look around. Do you see someone who is bent over, suffering in pain in mind, body or spirit? Some of us are bent over and we have a hard time seeing the suffering around us. Some people don’t want to look up and choose to look down. But even in our woundedness, God calls us to see the need around us. We can’t help everyone, but we can help someone.

Like the bent-over woman, maybe you have come here today in hope of being healed in some way in mind, body or soul. Look up. Look around. Take heart. Jesus’ words of healing and hope are spoken to you. Jesus’ healing touch makes you and makes all of us wounded healers whole again.

In our woundedness we are to praise God! In our healing we are to praise God!

Being a Wounded Healer means we need to allow God to use our affliction and wounds to grow empathy and compassion for other’s pain

and woundedness. Then knowing that God comforts us in all our troubles so then we can comfort others.

Let us look around us very carefully. We will see the wounded, the sick, the lonely, the hungry, the thirsty, and the depressed. And if you are willing to reach out with your wounds to heal their wounds, you may just see the face of Christ and realize that with his wounds we are healed.

Through the Wounded Healer, Jesus Christ, God has empowered each of us by his Holy Spirit to be wounded healers ourselves. He has turned his anxious disciples into powerful witnesses of his grace in the world.