

“Health”

2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c

Psalm 111

2 Timothy 2:8-15

Luke 17:11-19

In 2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c, we encounter Naaman, a commander of the army of the king of Aram, who had leprosy. In fact, the king tore his clothes to win God’s favor in healing Naaman. The prophet Elisha sent a message to Naaman and told him “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean” (2 Kings 5:10). Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:15 writes, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.” In both texts, the health of people is lifted as a high priority for followers who are committed to God. One’s health (emotional, physical, spiritual, and financial) is priceless for us to serve as effectively as possible.

Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft and who has a net worth of \$105 billion, was speaking at the annual convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Science some years ago. After Gates’s speech, a medical doctor with a PhD in philosophy asked a question: “If Bill Gates were blind, would he trade all his billions to have his sight restored?” The reply of Bill Gates shows where true value lies. Gates said he would trade all his money for his sight. Why? Gates surmised that if we have nothing else, but any measure of health, we have much for which to be grateful.¹ God speaks in testimonies like Bill Gates’s.

As in Psalm 111, questions about life and wherein true value lies creates ambiguity about the future. The people of God were in captivity and told by God to seek

¹Adapted from Craig Brian Larson, *Choice Contemporary Stories and Illustrations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 110.

the welfare of their captors. None of us, regardless how healthy or not we are, likes ambiguity, particularly as we think of the future. What traumas might splinter your life? How might loneliness force you to the fringe of society? Might an economic downturn devastate your well-being? Whose future may be doubtful, because of a deteriorating physical, mental, or emotional state? One's health matters. John Calvin writes, "When visited with affliction, it is of great importance that we should consider it as coming from God, and as explicitly intended for our God."² As Christians, this life is not our home. We are passing through, making a difference through the choices we make and the dependency we place on God. No matter how dire the circumstances may be, the future demands holding firm to Jesus and banking our hope on him. Yes, indeed, God speaks and God speaking is about holistic well-being...health.

The story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19 drives home the point that God speaks in everyday life circumstances. Ten lepers meet Jesus. They all cried out to him, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." All ten were healed, but only one, the Samaritan, a foreigner, returned to praise God. Robert Farrar Capon writes this concerning lepers and their deadly disease: lepers were "...losers who, because of their ostracizing affliction, were dead to ordinary social life; resurrection from the dead cannot be recognized, let alone be enjoyed, except on the basis of the acceptance of death."³ The Samaritan leper was grateful, because he had accepted his death. Jesus served him to healing and salvation. God serves you and me in our myriad of life issues. God heals us and raises us from the grave of many "deadly" situations and circumstances. And that truth should move us to gratitude and a desire to serve others in the same way. A restored health, in

²John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House company, 1981), vol. 5, 472.

³Robert Farrar Capon, *The Parables of Grace* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 164.

whatever form, calls for a response of gratitude from each of us.⁴

Are you seeking God for improved health? Are you listening to God for God's leading in your life? God is merciful and faithful from the beginning to the end. God is the Alpha and Omega. Jesus tells you that your faithfulness makes you well, a faithfulness that grows in you even with your differences not despite them.

Next Sunday is In-Gathering Sunday. Seek Jesus' guidance and read the Bible to fill out your 2023 Pledge Card with discernment. The Session has prepared a balanced budget. The Session has listened to you in that preparation. The Session is now asking each of us to lean into Geneva's future by increasing our 2022 pledge by five percent. In gratitude for what God has done, is doing, and will do in each of our lives, trust God to meet your needs as individuals and the needs of our congregation. God will use you and the ministries of this congregation to address the needs of the people and communities beyond these walls. How our church serves the Saddleback Valley and World in 2023 depends on your obedient, faithful, and grateful financial giving.

Giving and serving are two of the five expectations Geneva has of its members and regular attenders. Giving and serving are integral for our church identity of loving God, loving others, making disciples, being inclusive, and living the way of Jesus by being just, kind, and humble. We are to be obedient to God's Word about financial giving and serving. It is not optional.

God speaks to us through hearing God's Word taught, preached, and serving God's people. Michael Horton writes, "The gospel is not wishful thinking...It's the announcement of a fact...That's what preaching is: telling us the truth about who God is, what he requires

⁴In the two paragraphs of biblical interpretation above, I have benefited from the thinking of Jared E. Alcantara, Song-Mi Suzie Park, David Gambrell, Ken Evers-Hood, David F. White, Richard W. Voelz, and Nancy Lynne Westfield in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery and Cynthia L. Rigby, editors, *Connections, Year C, Volume 3* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 374-376, 376-378, 379-381, 382-384, 384-385, 386-388 and 388-390.

of us, where we stand with him, what he has done to save us in his Son, and how we are to live in the light of his marvelous gift.”⁵ The Bible’s message is simple. We are to love God, love others, and make disciples. It is all about your health (emotional, physical, spiritual, and financial) to become fully human the way God intended. Amen!

*This sermon was preached (for the In-Person, Online, and Village TV 6 congregations)
on Sunday, 09 October 2022 by the Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh at
Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, California*

Copyright © 2022
Steven M. Marsh
All Rights Reserved.

⁵Michael Horton, *Core Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 68.