

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY**

The Rev. Arthur W. Ward, Jr. + Rector

*“Healing Faith”*

**THE CHIEF TOOL OF THE DEVIL**

There’s a story about the devil auctioning off some of his tools. He had a high price on pride and arrogance, on lust and laziness, on envy and jealousy. But there was one tool that had a sign under it, “*Not For Sale.*” Someone asked, “What’s that tool, and why isn’t it for sale?” “Well,” the devil replied, “I can’t afford to get rid of that one. It’s my chief tool. It’s called discouragement. With this tool, I can pry open a heart and once I get in I can do most anything I want.”

How true. I mean think about it, for a moment, if you are discouraged in your marriage or in your family situation, if you are discouraged about your past or with your body (with a chronic illness or physical impediment) – such things can drag you down not just physically but psychologically and spiritually, and lead us down the wrong path. You see the devil knows that once discouragement sets in we won’t be able to do much of anything for the Lord or for ourselves. That’s why it’s a favorite tool of the devil.

**THE HEALING POWER OF GOD**

So what is the antidote to discouragement? What is the answer to overcoming discouragement in our lives? The healing power of God. God is in the business of restoring lives, of mending that which is broken, of bringing healing to those who are sick and discouraged. And the key to experiencing the healing power of God is having a healing faith. A healing faith must be present in our lives if we are going to experience the healing power of God on a continual basis.

In fact, we find that throughout Jesus’ ministry, that faith was the one thing that was constant whenever someone experienced the power of God. In our gospel lesson from **Luke 8**, Jesus said to the woman with a hemorrhage, “*Your faith has made you well.*” In another account from **Matthew 9**, as Jesus touched the eyes of two blind men to heal them, He said, “*be it done according to your faith.*” And their eyes were opened.

When a storm arose as the disciples were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee with Jesus, they were afraid. Jesus rose from sleeping and calmed the storm. But then he said “*Why are you so timid, oh men of little faith?*” And we read in **Mark 6**, that Jesus could not perform miracles in his hometown because of a lack of faith. In fact, it says that “*He marveled at their unbelief.*”

Faith is the starting point in our walks with the Lord. So much so that in **Hebrews 11:6** it says “*that without faith it is impossible to please God.*” So if I am going to battle discouragement, if I am going to experience the healing power of God then I need to understand not only what healing faith is but how to make

sure it is a part of my life. And when it comes to a healing faith, we will see that there are five things that are true about it. In fact, we find these five keys in each of the three readings today (see **2 Kings 5:1-19; James 5:13-18; Luke 8:43-46**).

### **A TRUE FAITH**

First, a healing faith is a true faith. What do I mean by that? Well we need to understand what faith is? **Hebrews 11:1** says, "*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" In other words, we trust even though we don't physically see the reality yet. God has promised us many things but these will be ours in the future. We are looking forward to them by faith even though we haven't experienced them yet. And when we talk about faith the most important element is the object of our faith. You see it is not faith in faith, or faith in our fellow man, or faith in goodness, or faith in positive thinking or some feel good philosophy. It is faith in the one true and living God.

Naaman the Syrian had been following his native god – *Rimmon*. But for a moment, he decided to place his trust in the God of Elisha. Naaman had faith before but it was in a false god. Now he was placing his trust in the One True God. While Elisha didn't even meet Naaman or pray over him, Naaman still did what the prophet told him and he was healed. As a result of seeing God's power, Naaman recognized that there is no other God on the earth but the LORD. Elisha drove this point home by not taking anything in return for the healing. And Naaman pledged never again to offer sacrifices to any god except the Lord.

The hemorrhaging woman sensed that there was something different about Jesus. The very power of God simply flowed out of Jesus. She put her faith in Christ and as a result, she was healed. You see Christ is unlike any other person who has walked the earth. He is the full revelation of the one true God. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" (**Jn. 1:1; 14.**) So if we put our faith in Jesus, we are putting our faith in the one true God.

So the object of our faith must always be the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you will get folks who will say that people are healed in other religions. I won't dispute that for we know that there is also supernatural evil and Satan is a deceiver and Satan has power as well. But the healings that occur at the name of Jesus happen every day. And this is especially true when false religions are confronted in His name. Jennifer Brylinski, one of our own members, went to India a year and a half ago. India is a place plagued with false religions and gods, and great suffering, I might add. But as people came forward to receive Jesus as their Lord, she saw mighty miracles take place; blind eyes and deaf ears opened, tumors gone. And with those miracles more people turning to Jesus. Why? There is power in the name Jesus because of what the name represents – the one true God.

## **AN EXPECTANT FAITH**

But what else is true about a healing faith? A healing faith is an expectant faith. **Hebrews 11:6** says that *“without God it is impossible to please him and then it goes on to say for he who comes to God must believe that He exists and is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”* Do you know what that is saying? That not only do we need to put our faith in the one true God but that we need to expect Him to bless us. God is good. Why? Because it is His nature. God wants to bless us. He wants us to experience His goodness. Jesus said in **Jn. 10:10**, *“I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.”* But that only comes when we have a faith that is expecting God to work. We don’t know exactly how, we don’t know what it will look like but we move forward in faith expecting a move of God.

That’s what Namaan did, didn’t he? He expected something to happen otherwise he would not have washed in the Jordan seven times like Elisha told him to do. James expected God not only to forgive us when we confess our sins but that the power of God would be displayed when we pray by faith for the sick. He declares, *“The prayer of faith will save the sick man.”* And the hemorrhaging woman expected to receive healing by touching Jesus cloak. We read in **Mt. 9:21**, that she was saying to herself, *“If only I can touch his garment, I shall get well.”* You see, there was expectation. A healing faith is a faith that expects God to act and do good in any given situation.

## **AN OBEDIENT FAITH**

But not only is a healing faith a true faith and an expectant faith, it is an obedient faith. This is probably the hardest point of all - obedience. While our salvation is not determined by our obedience, but by faith, the degree to which we experience the blessing of God is determined by our obedience. Jesus said, *“Don’t worry about what you will eat or wear, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.”* (**Mt. 5:33**). In other words, if I am going to have my needs met, I need to be doing something. I need to be seeking *first* the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and that means I am going to be committed to doing His will and doing what is right. **James 2:13** says, *“Faith without works is dead.”* In other words, Faith without obedience is dead. I’ll give you another example: **Proverbs 21:13** – *“He who shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, will also cry out and not be answered.”* God says to help the poor. That is an example of doing what is right. But if I ignore the poor, God will ignore me!

And often times what God tells us to do doesn’t feel right or isn’t pleasing to our flesh. Naaman took issue with the fact that he had to wash not in his own river but in the river Jordan and that he had to do it not once, but seven times! But he went ahead and did it anyway. He obeyed. There is no other way but to trust and obey!

James told us to confess our sins – not only in order to be forgiven but to pledge that we will do better. For then he gives the example of Elijah who prayed that it might not rain and it didn’t. Why? James tells us in **James 5:16**: *“The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effect.”* In other words, God listened to Elijah because he was sold out for the Lord. He was an obedient servant. And how about the Apostles Paul and

Peter? The power of God flowed through them, didn't it? Why? They were righteous. They were seeking first God's kingdom and His will. They had an obedient faith: a faith that trust and obeys.

You see you can't expect God to heal you if you are being disobedient. It just won't work, especially if you are a believer. For example, you can't expect God to heal you of a back problem if you are in an adulterous relationship. You can't expect God to heal you of your past if you are harboring unforgiveness. Sin cuts us off from the power of God. But when we are obedient to the Lord, His power flows through us like a mighty river.

### **A PERSEVERING FAITH**

What else is true about a healing faith? It is a faith that perseveres. A healing faith is a faith that is patient and persistent. In short, it perseveres when things aren't going right, when there may be doubt or when there is discouragement. **Psalm 30:6 says: "Weeping may spend the night but joy comes in the morning."** In Christ, the darkness and despair of Good Friday is always followed by the light and joy of Easter. Over and over again we are reminded in Scripture to continue to press on. Why do you think that Naaman was asked to wash seven times? Not only to show the need for obedience but to show that healing often is a process and the life of faith requires perseverance. The hemorrhaging women waited 12 years before she was healed.

### **A SHARING FAITH**

Finally, a healing faith is not just a true faith, an expectant faith, an obedient faith and a persevering faith, but it is a sharing faith. We are to share with others what God is doing in our lives. Isn't that how people get healed? By first coming in contact with the Word of God through others. Naaman found out about Elisha through a young girl. James could write of Elijah because he knew the accounts found in the Hebrew Scriptures. The hemorrhaging women came to Jesus because she heard about all the good He was doing. And when God heals us or does something good in our lives we are to share it? Why? It brings encouragement and strengthens the faith of those around us. Why are we so timid? We have the greatest name under heaven to share with others, and yet often we don't step out in faith.

That's why we have this outreach event called *Rock, Rods, and Relationships*. It's a way for us to share the love of God and the good news of Jesus Christ. It is why after we are anointed with oil for healing that if we feel something or notice something different after being prayed over we should share it with those around us. My friends, God does not want us to be discouraged. He wants us to be encouraged and strengthened by His healing power.

Are you discouraged? Look to the Lord; put your faith in Him, expect Him to do a good work in your life, obey him, don't give up but persevere. And if you are not discouraged, find someone who is, and share with them the love of Jesus. Maybe it's your next-door neighbor. Maybe it's a co-worker. Maybe it's your spouse. Maybe it's someone here today. So may you be encouraged and take hold of a healing faith today and always. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!