

## Healing A

This morning we begin a series of teachings on a topic that I have been reluctant to approach literally for decades. But God has made it clear that I should avoid it no more, for the subject is "what does God say about healing?"

One of the reasons that I've avoided the topic is that it is accompanied by strong feelings for many of us, from three very different directions. First, some of you have testimonies of how God has intervened in your life or the life of a loved one through His miraculous healing touch, and few things get you as excited as seeing God's healing in action.

Others of you, however, may be far more negative about the topic. Perhaps you prayed earnestly for years for a loved one to be healed, and they were not, and in fact perhaps they even died. And to make matters worse, perhaps someone told you that they would have been healed if you had exercised enough faith or just prayed the right words, so in addition to weight of the illness you also carry around a huge load of guilt. For you, the topic of divine healing has left a very bitter taste. For you, the topic of healing is mostly a painful one, quite a different emotional response from those in the first group.

Then, there are others, perhaps most of us, who have mixed feelings about the subject. We really do believe that God can heal, but we have lots of questions. Is there some formula that brings healing every time? Does God sometimes will sickness for a higher purpose? Is it presumptuous to pray boldly for healing? How do doctors fit into God's plan, if at all? And what about God's sovereignty in all of this? And last, but not least, how much of what certain televangelists claim to be healings are genuine and how much are outright fraud?

So what do we do with this emotional clash of enthusiasm, heartbreak and uncertainty over the topic of healing? Three things, I think. First, we can be honest with one another with where we are. Second, we can be gracious with one another. We certainly don't need to be beating one another up over the subject of healing!! And finally, we can all humbly go back to the Word of God to see anew what God has to say about this important topic. And over the next several

weeks, that is what we are going to do.

If this church and this valley is to be a place of healing, and I believe it is, we need to lay a solid Biblical foundation of what the healing ministry here is to be about. Trust me, I'm no expert in healing, but I do believe that we are called to learn together. We need to prepare to become a Place of Healing.

But this cannot be merely an academic discussion. Healing in many areas is something all of us need to experience as well as to study. As Andy Pankratz said the other day, "If this is to be a place of healing, we need to be healed people," or at least people in the process of healing. Yes we are broken people, but the Gospel does not leave us in our brokenness. It really does have the power to repair us emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and ultimately, physically (because we get new bodies!). Many of us are still carrying deep emotional wounds from our childhood that are not consistent with being a new creature in Christ! Some of us still carry around unforgiveness for things that could have been made right years ago. God wants to heal those things so that we can move forward into the abundant life that Jesus promised.

So we are not going to rush through this. If healing is to be foundational in the ministry of this church, we need to lay a good foundation [builders?]. And our foundation must be laid upon God's Word.

So when the Bible speaks about healing, what does it mean? Is healing physical only, spiritual only, or something else? And why is God concerned with healing anyway?

The primary OT word for healing is *rapha*, which simply means "to heal" or "to make healthy". In its 67 appearances, many times it clearly means physical healing (Genesis 20:17, Exodus 15:26) But *rapha* is also used of spiritual healing (2 Chronicles 7:14, Isaiah 57:15-19, Jeremiah 30:12-22) The point is, whatever kind of healing we need, God is our Healer and He desires to heal us.

In the NT, the words we find for healing are primarily three: *therapueo* means "a healing or

curing" and comes from "an attendant", literally "a therapist". See Revelation 22:2 Iaomai and related words iama and iasis, usually refers to physical healing, but also can have a spiritual connotation: See Matthew 15:28, Matthew 13:14-15 Sozo or diasozo means "to be saved or saved thoroughly" See Matthew 9:21-22, Mark 6:56

So what general things can we conclude from these verses? 1. God is a Healer 2. Healing can be both physical and spiritual 3. There is a link between being saved and being healed.

Now it is easy to get lost in the weeds when talking about healing, so the big thing I want us to see this morning is to understand, if nothing else, that God is FOR Healing! He is Jehovah Rapha, our Healer. In the big picture, He desires and works for healing in all of its aspects. His heart is FOR healing, spiritual, emotional, relational and physical healing. You see His heart clearly in verses like 1 Timothy 2:3,4 and 2 Peter 3:9. Please see His heart here! He is a God Who desires salvation, a God Who desires healing, a God who desires reconciliation. Also Ezekial 18:23

So this takes us to the important issue of what is God's plan for His creation, including us? And the Biblical answer is not that He is going to destroy His creation, but that He will save or restore His creation by making it new. Yes, there will a measure of destruction by fire, but it is a passing away by refining rather than an absolute destruction so that all of creation can be restored to God's original plan. (Even when people "pass away" they are not destroyed) God is for the redemption of His creation, not its dissolution. The old earth is the basis of the new earth.

The big picture, the metanarrative of the Bible, then, is this: God created the universe, sin disrupted the created order in all its aspects, God sent Jesus to counteract sin and all its effects, and one day the created order will be restored to what God had originally planned. See Colossians 1:15-20, Romans 8:18-22

Jesus calls this new order the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God (they are synonymous). This kingdom, where God rules in perfection, is a kingdom of truth, of restoration and of

healing. We see it in its perfection in Revelation, but it also has a present form as it operates in God's people on earth, right now. George Eldon Ladd: "The kingdom of God is future, but it is not only future. The powers of the Age to Come have penetrated this Age. While we still live in the present evil Age and while Satan is still the god of this Age, we may taste the powers of the Coming Age."

As I most clearly see it, then, the church is to be the "advance force" of the coming kingdom of God. We advance the kingdom whenever and wherever we align ourselves with the heart of God, and the heart of God is for salvation, for reconciliation and for healing. These things characterize God's kingdom and should characterize our lives as well.

Something we too often miss is how many times Jesus connected the healing ministry with the reality of the kingdom of God. See Matthew 4:23, 10:7-8, 12:28, Luke 9:1-2, 10:8-9

In this context, then, it is important to note how many times that Jesus calls the Gospel "the Gospel of the kingdom". This is important, because of course Jesus had the bigger picture. We think "the Gospel" means the good news of being saved from eternal death by believing in Jesus, and that is true, but the bigger picture is that Jesus's death and resurrection also meant that an entirely new order is coming in place, thus it is the Gospel of the kingdom, not merely the Gospel of personal salvation. We need to not skip too quickly over verses like Mark 1:14-15. READ I like a quote by Bob Hamp in this regard: "The Gospel is the good news about God restoring all of creation to its factory settings." God is for healing because He is for restoring all things. To paraphrase Andrew Wilson, "the basic trajectory of God's creation is ultimately in the direction of healing." Yes, He will ultimately heal our bodies and He will ultimately heal all of creation.

So what does all of this have to do with healing? When we align ourselves with the heart of God, we will align ourselves with the kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of healing, reconciliation and salvation. God is for healing, and when we pursue His healing, we are pursuing His heart. We are to pursue the advance of His kingdom, and although it may not advance perfectly, an imperfect advance is still an advance. Did the apostles have 100% success when they preached

the Gospel in the book of Acts? Not at all, but can you argue that the kingdom did not advance? Not at all! And I believe that as we pursue spiritual, emotional, relational and physical healing as a part of the Gospel of the kingdom, that kingdom will advance through us as well. Even right here in Lake City.

## QUESTIONS

1. In what ways has your personal history or background influenced your response to the topic of divine healing?
2. How can we demonstrate grace to one another as we work through this topic in the upcoming weeks?
3. What are some of the questions about Christian healing that you believe are most important to answer?