



When have you longed for healing in your life? What healing did you experience? Was it what you expected, or was it something different?
- Take 40 seconds to think, 2-3 minutes to talk



The story today about the healing at the pools at Siloam reminded me of a movie we watched here last summer called the Miracle Club
Women from small town in Ireland travel to Lourdes to visit pools which supposedly offer miraculous healing
Each has a very specific request, a intention for the healing they need at Lourdes.
When they return home, none have received healing they expected –
but all have received healing they need



Today's gospel reading includes two very different stories of healing miracles – so different, it seems hard to find in them any general lessons about healing.
In the first, the Roman official comes to Jesus asking Jesus to heal his son
And Jesus says, go home, your son lives.
John tells us that this healing is the second sign Jesus performs in Cana.
The sign leads to belief in Jesus –
by the Roman official, and then by his whole household.

Then Jesus returns to Jerusalem, and is walking by the pools of Siloam
when he sees a man lying on a mat.
He asks the man, “Do you want to be healed?”
The man replies, of course he wants to be healed –
he's waited for years to be healed, but he has no one to help him into the pool!
Jesus says, “Pick up your mat and walk.”
And the man does.
And it doesn't lead to anyone believing in Jesus –
the man he heals doesn't even know who Jesus is.



As different as they are, there are a few common threads in these stories
First, Jesus – the Word of God – heals by the power of his words.
He simply needs to speak to make someone well.
God, who spoke the world into being, walks among humans in the person of Jesus,
and has the power to give new and abundant life.

The second lesson is that healing does not depend on the belief of the one healed.
We may have echoes of healing stories in other gospels,
 in which Jesus says “Your faith has made you well.”
But here, the healing Jesus gives is a gift of grace.
The official must have had some trust in Jesus, in order to approach him at all,
 but he is said to “believe in Jesus” after Jesus declares his son well.
And the man by the pool never asks for help from Jesus or even knows who he is –
 his healing comes out of nowhere,
 and functions in John’s gospel not as a sign leading to belief,
but as part of the drama unfolding between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders.

Finally, neither person receives healing in the way that they expect it.
The Roman official surely expects Jesus to come home with him,
 to lay hands on his son, and perform a miracle in some dramatic way.
Instead, Jesus simply says, go home, your son lives.
And the man waiting by the pool has been sure for so long
 that his healing depends on getting into the pool.
He must be shocked when a stranger comes along and says,
 Get up and walk – and suddenly, he is cured.

It’s this last lesson which opens us to us a new way of thinking
 about healing and grace.
Often, we come to God with specific requests for healing for ourselves or others.
Sometimes, that healing happens.
Often, it does not.

In the Miracle Club movie, each of the women travels
 with a specific malady causing her fear, heartache, or pain.
None of these maladies are cured by the pools.
One woman has a discussion with the sister/nurse who helps her bathe in the pool,
 and learns that there have actually been very few miraculous healings
 at Lourdes over the years.
She is disappointed – more than that, she feels angry and betrayed.
Why bring us here if there are no miracles? She challenges her priest.
 What’s the point, anyway?
Yet in their time together at Lourdes, the four women talk and connect.
They confess old wrongdoings and current fears, and receive forgiveness.
They form community and renew old bonds.

As they prepare to travel home, the priest tells them,
We don't come to Lourdes for the miracles.
We come to Lourdes to renew our faith for the journey we walk.



We, too, know that healing comes in many forms.
Healing of emotional wounds and spiritual fears.
Healing of relationships and community.
Healing that is really making peace with whatever causes our suffering,
knowing God is with us, and we don't carry it alone.

When a patient goes into Hospice, they and their loved ones have decided
to stop pursuing a cure that is not going to come.
Yet the patient and the family are visited by chaplains and volunteers,
to provide a space for healing to come-
healing of spirit born of loving presence and prayer;
letting go of what will not be and being present to what is, now.

Similarly, I have often visited with one of you at home or in the hospital,
and assured you that not just I but this community of faith
was praying for you.

Again and again, you have told me, I know, Pastor.

I can feel it. It gives me strength.

We can't explain just what our prayers do,

but we know they are an important and valuable part of being in community.

Praying for one another, praying for healing,

is an important part of what it means to be the church,

which is why there is a section of prayers for healing in the front of the ELW – pages

I will close with one of those prayers:

Almighty and merciful God, you are the only source of health and healing; you alone can bring calmness and peace. Grant to us, your children, an awareness of your presence and a strong confidence in you. In our pain, our weariness, and our anxiety, surround us with your care, protect us by your loving might, and permit us once more to enjoy health and strength and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

And all the people said, **Amen.**