



Introduction

In Isaiah the one God who sits above the earth and numbers the stars also strengthens the powerless. So in Jesus' healing work we see the hand of the creator God, lifting up the sick woman to health and service

(diakonia). Like Simon's mother-in-law, we are lifted up and healed to serve. Following Jesus, we strengthen the powerless; like Jesus, we seek to renew our own strength in quiet times of prayer.

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✚ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✚ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 842 / LBW # 548

Oh, Worship the King

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

The Judeans in exile have a good reason to be hopeful: the one who will bring them to freedom is the God who created the world, the God who subdues the rulers of the earth and gives strength to those who are weary.

Read the text [here](#).

Psalmody: Psalm 147:1-11, 20c

¹Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises to our God!

How pleasant it is to honor God with praise!

²**The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem,
and gathers the exiles of Israel.**

³The LORD heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

⁴**The LORD counts the number of the stars
and calls them all | by their names.**

⁵Great is our LORD and mighty in power;
there is no limit to God's wisdom.

⁶**The LORD lifts up the lowly,
but casts the wicked to the ground.**

⁷Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
make music upon the harp to our God,

⁸**who covers the heavens with clouds
and prepares rain for the earth,
making grass to grow upon the mountains.**

⁹God provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they cry.

¹⁰**God is not impressed by the might of a horse,
and has no pleasure in the speed of a runner,**

¹¹but finds pleasure in those who fear the LORD,
in those who await God's steadfast love.

^{20c}Hallelujah!

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39

Everywhere Jesus goes, many people expect him to set them free from oppression. Everywhere he goes, he heals people and sets them free. Disease, devils, and death are running for their lives. The forces that diminish human life are rendered powerless by Jesus.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

Can you play a game of “Let’s Pretend” with me for a moment? Imagine staying home from worship one Sabbath; going back to lie down in your bed because you are feeling ill and running a fever...

Imagine that your son-in-law shows up at home after worship with his friend Jesus. And immediately after hearing that you are ill, Jesus comes into your room, takes your hand, lifts you up out of bed, and you realize that your fever is gone and you feel well again.

What would you do? As we read in this gospel text, in this situation, Peter’s mother-in-law started bustling about, preparing food for her guests!

Can you imagine the conversation that must have been going on over dinner? As you learn that during worship, Jesus astounded people with his preaching and the miraculous healing of a man – quite possibly someone you know well – who was possessed by an unclean spirit.

It's really hard to imagine the impact this miracle had, unless you can imagine yourself in that house, sick in that bed, and immediately raised up to health.

Word gets out, of course, as it does in close-knit communities, and by the time the Sabbath is over at sundown, it seems like everyone in the whole town is gathered at your doorstep, seeking a miracle for someone they know and love.

Filled with compassion, Jesus does what Jesus does – he casts out more demons and heals those who are sick – restoring them to health.

But we know that those cures were temporary, right? I don’t mean just for a few minutes or a day or two. I mean that each of those people who were restored to health and wholeness that day eventually grew older or was sick again. Jesus gave them a cure. But they were still mortal. Their time here in this life eventually came to an end.

Too many people we know are or have been sick in our lives. Especially, it seems, in this past year. And while we seek medical care for everyone who needs it, we also pray for them.

Our prayer list is long – a page filled with names of those in our families, our congregation, and our community that we lift in prayer for healing.

And let's be honest, when we pray for healing, we hope that we will witness a cure much like this one. We want these dear ones to be restored to health and we rejoice when that happens.

But sometimes, when the circumstances are dire, our prayers gradually change. We may still pray for healing, but if we are honest, we begin to pray for the kind of healing that does not come from medical care.

We begin to pray for God to release our loved one from pain and suffering; for them to leave this life peacefully and enter into the joy of eternal life with God where there will be no more sickness or pain – no matter how much that idea troubles us and no matter how much we will grieve after their death.

That too, is a faithful prayer.

It is no coincidence that the Greek word for Jesus lifting up Peter's mother-in-law - *egeiro* - is used again in Mark's gospel. There are at least two notable places:

The first is in chapter 5 with the healing – or rather the raising – of Jairus' daughter. After the neighbors have already spread the word that she is dead, Jesus enters the house, and takes her hand and tells her to arise. And she stands, restored to life and health, as Peter's mother-in-law does in today's gospel passage.

The final place this word appears is in the final chapter of Mark's gospel. Can you guess? After his death on the cross, Jesus, too, is raised - or lifted up - to new life.

Too many people we know and love have been ill. We have often prayed for healing, when of course we have meant that we want a cure. But sometimes, that cure does not come in this world.

Those are the times when we can rejoice that not only did Jesus lift up Peter's mother-in-law and Jairus' daughter restoring them to health and life, but God the Father lifted up Jesus to new life.

Because we trust in the promise -the sure and certain promise - that Jesus has gone before us. He is the firstborn of the dead to be raised up to eternal life, preparing the way for us.

Those are the times that we can sing with great joy, because we know that Jesus has already lifted us up in many smaller, more ordinary ways. We can claim the promise of the Resurrection, knowing that through Jesus, God has already lifted us up to live with him forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 860 / WOV # 673

I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

For the church: for ministries of healing and wholeness, for hospital, hospice, and military chaplains, for those serving in prison ministry, for all who proclaim freedom and release in the name of Christ, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For creation: for insects in the grass, clouds on the mountaintops, for cattle and the rainwater they drink, for the humility to take our place among all creatures of the earth, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the nations: for all who lead in cities and towns, states and countries; for community organizers, school officials, and CEOs; for international health organizations, that in times of trial, fear, or hopelessness, they find freedom in service to those most in need, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all wearied by life's burdens: for those who are poor, for those lacking supportive relationships, for those crushed by debt, for those struggling with chronic pain or other sickness, for those exhausted from overwork or stress, and for all who cry out to you (especially those we lift up now), let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For these congregations: for outreach and social ministries; for ministries of companionship and support, for those who open us to new understandings, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In thanksgiving for the faithful departed, who were called by name and now rest from their labors, that their lives serve as witnesses to the goodness of God, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Closing Hymn ELW # 858 / LBW 543 *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe.