

## **“Healing through Prayer & Anointing”** (James 5:13–20)(10.23.22)

James 5:13–20 (NIV84) *The Prayer of Faith*

<sup>13</sup>Is any one of you in trouble (or suffering, or afflicted)? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup>Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well (or save the one who is sick, or restore the one who is sick); the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

<sup>17</sup>Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup>Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

<sup>19</sup>My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, <sup>20</sup>remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death (or save his soul from death, or save the sinner’s soul from death) and cover over a multitude of sins.

## **The word of God for the people of God.**

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"Healing through Prayer & Anointing"**

INTRODUCTION:

For the ease of explanation, I am going to reverse the order of two verses; but, not changing them or their meaning. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV84) Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:26 (NIV84) If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

That should make clear to all of us that we all have a special connection together. We have a special and unique relationship. We are to be a Christian Community. Too often we might think of ourselves as individual circles that only intersect for a short time Sunday mornings.

James informs us that that shortcoming is not to be in the Church. He is speaking about doing life together. In tough times and in times of celebration we are to recognize that we are a family of God. We praise together. We pray together.

The concept of connectedness is cemented by the direction to call the elders of the church. The elders are the spiritually mature in the congregation who have authority in a local body of Christ. So, they represent the Church Body; never forgetting that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body.

Earlier we had a time of corporate confession and I also offered a time of personal confession. I confess to you now that I have been remiss. Although I have prayed for healing in many instances, private and public, I have failed to emphasize that this teaching by James is instrumental in defining a Body of Christ.

It is a little scary praying for healing. What if the person is not healed in the way we thought they should be healed or in the timing we considered reasonable? If they are not healed, was **their** faith not strong enough? If they are not healed, was **our** faith not strong enough? Was there sin in their life so that God wouldn't hear us? Was there sin in the prayer's life, us, that God wouldn't hear us? Or, and I can hear Satan cackling, are God's promises not to be counted on?

BODY:

Starting in the middle of August, I spent four weeks preaching to you about depression and a

biblical and spiritual response to depression. Then I taught you about the great love of God. Then we remembered Who God Is. The following week, we examined the essential issue of the Christian faith, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We deepened our gratitude as we looked at the fullness of God's grace. And, the last two weeks, we have been looking at biblical and divine peace. It is natural for us to continue here in the fifth chapter of James because it continues in the theme of peace, which you will soon see.

One of our great resources in the United Methodist Church is the Book of Worship. I first learned about it when my wife, Carol, and I took our first Lay Speaker's Course together. It provides orders of worship for many types of services. It contains many prayers and other elements of the worship service. The Book of Worship provides this background information for Healing Services:

“Scripture strongly affirms ministries of spiritual healing, which in recent years have received renewed emphasis throughout Christ's holy Church. The root of the word *healing* in New Testament Greek, *sozo*, is the same as that of *salvation* and *wholeness*. Spiritual healing is God's work of offering persons balance, harmony, and wholeness of body,

mind, spirit, and relationships through confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Through such healing, God works to bring about reconciliation between God and humanity, among individuals and communities, within each person, and between humanity and the rest of creation. The New Testament records that Jesus himself healed the estranged and sick and sent out his disciples on ministries of healing. James (5:14–16a) calls us also to pray for and anoint the sick, that they may be healed.

All healing is of God. The Church's healing ministry in no way detracts from the gifts God gives through medicine and psychotherapy. It is no substitute for either medicine or the proper care of one's health. Rather, it adds to our total resources for wholeness.

Healing is not magic, but underlying it is the great mystery of God's love. Those who minister spiritual healing are channels of God's love. Although no one can predict what will happen in a given instance, many marvelous healings have taken place.

God does not promise that we shall be spared suffering but does promise to be with us in our suffering. Trusting that promise, we are enabled to recognize God's sustaining presence in pain, sickness, injury, and estrangement.

Likewise, God does not promise that we will be cured of all illnesses; and we all must face the inevitability of death. A Service of Healing is not necessarily a service of curing, but it provides an atmosphere in which healing can happen.

The greatest healing of all is the reunion or reconciliation of a human being with God. When this happens, physical healing sometimes occurs, mental and emotional balance is often restored, spiritual health is enhanced, and relationships are healed. For the Christian the basic purpose of spiritual healing is to renew and strengthen one's relationship with the living Christ.

Patterns of healing services grow out of both Church traditions and the needs of the moment. Prayers for healing, accompanied if desired by anointing with the laying on of hands, may be incorporated into any service of

congregational worship as a Response to the Word. Many find not only prayer but also Holy Communion, laying on of hands, and anointing with oil to be healing.

Laying on of hands, anointing with oil, and the less formal gesture of holding someone's hand all show the power of touch, which plays a central role in the healings recorded in the New Testament. Jesus often touched others—blessing children, washing feet, healing injuries or disease, and raising people from death.

Biblical precedent combines with our natural desire to reach out to persons in need in prompting us to touch gently and lovingly those who ask for healing prayers. Such an act is a tangible expression of the presence of the healing Christ, working in and through those who minister in his name.

Anointing the forehead with oil is a sign act invoking the healing love of God. The oil points beyond itself and those doing the anointing to the action of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the healing Christ, who is God's Anointed One. Olive oil is traditionally used in anointing.

A much deeper and more appropriate prayer in times of suffering is that of “what?” “Lord, what are you saying to me through these difficulties?” “Father, what do you want me to learn, or what do you wish for me to do?”

Sometimes, the most appropriate prayer is, “Help!” That prayer is predicated upon our understanding of who we are and who God is. It is an acknowledgement of our need for His help.

Or sometimes the appropriate prayer is that of praise and thanksgiving as Paul and Silas demonstrated in the Philippian jail as they prayed and sang hymns of praise to God after being beaten with rods, placed in stocks, and locked in the inner prison (Acts 16:23–34).”

In our NIV translation, James says we are to offer prayer **in** faith. Other translations say to offer the prayer **of** faith. The “prayer of faith” is given in 1 John 5:14–15 (NIV84)<sup>14</sup> This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.<sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

In the first chapter of James, he instructs Christians: James 1:6–7 (NIV84)<sup>6</sup> But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.<sup>7</sup> That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

Besides doubting God, what else might hinder our prayers for healing, or anything else? In addition to being a possible cause of sickness, sin can also impede our prayer.

Proverbs 15:29 (NIV84)

<sup>29</sup> The Lord is far from the wicked

but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Psalms 66:18 (NIV84)

<sup>18</sup> If I had cherished sin in my heart,

the Lord would not have listened;

John 9:31 (NIV84)

<sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will.

There are several other verses that support the same truth – sin creates static in our prayer communication channel with our heavenly Father. That is why we took time today to pray a prayer of

confession corporately and also silently. We claim God's promise in 1 John 1:9 (NIV84) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

That brings us to the example of Elijah whose prayers were powerful and effective because he was a righteous man. In the Reflection Questions, I refer you to his example in 1 Kings chapter 18. James says a curious thing about Elijah. Everyone knows that Elijah was a great prophet of God. So, what does James mean when he says the Elijah was a man just like us. You and I have access to the same God to whom Elijah prayed. And, it is God's power that makes the prayers effective.

Pastor Adrian Rogers explains, "You know, God does business with those that mean business and James says the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

## CONCLUSION:

"A great preacher, Dr. A. C. Dickson, said, "When we depend upon organization, we get what organization can do, and that's something. When we depend upon education, we get what education can do, and that is something. When we depend upon money, we get what money can do, and that is something. When we depend upon singing and

preaching, we get what they can do, and that is something.""

"But, then Dr. A. C. Dickson said, "When we depend upon prayer, we will get what God can do." And, then this great preacher went on to say, "What all the churches and all the homes and all the schools and all the individuals need is what God can do, and how shall we get what God can do? **By prayer out of hearts that are right with God.**""

Amen and amen. Let us pray.