

Healing the City
One Person at a Time

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The backdrop for today requires us to go back to a mountain-top experience thousands of years ago after God led his people out of Egypt into the wilderness. God called Moses up to the top of a mountain for 40 days and nights; he prayed and listened to God and God's presence descended over the mountain and he revealed what Moses needed to know to make Israel a true nation. Through them, all nations would be brought into a covenant relationship and be healed

When Moses came down from the mountain, the people of Israel had forgotten who they were and made an idol of a golden calf and were worshiping it. This is the state of the world.

We have been in a series called Healing the City One Person at a Time. Two weeks ago, Eric talked about Healing, last week it was about the City and today we will talk about One Person at a Time.

Forgiveness:

Let's start with the idea that Jesus healed one person at a time most of the time which is not efficient! Remember John's gospel and the blind man at the side of the road and the son of the Centurion. While Jesus healed them, he talked with them and listened to their stories and told them their true identities and what they could do next to step into these identities.

For example, the paralyzed man had friends who lowered him through the roof: the first thing Jesus said was "Son, your sins are forgiven." *To be forgiven is to be healed.* This is because when we are forgiven of our sins, we are connected and intimate with God our Father. With this comes awareness of our true identity and the capacity to live out what we were created for. Whatever is happening in your life, if you are forgiven, you are truly healed. We can still long for more but God gives us pathways to walk into them.

Healing:

We heal because we belong. Our story is healed when we step into forgiveness. We heal because we belong to God and belong to each other: we step into a family of brothers and sisters who are equipped to help us and long to see our healing. We are then able to extend forgiveness to others.

A second mountain-top experience happened in Mark 9 (our reading this morning). The transfiguration story is also seen in Matt 17 and Luke 9, 2,000 years after the first mountain-top experience of Moses. Jesus went to the mountain to pray and while he was there, the best experience happened: he was joined by Elijah and Moses to have a conversation. The cloud of God's presence descends and a voice says "This is my son whom I love, listen to him." Jesus's clothes are changed to dazzling white, revealing who he really is. Then they come down from the mountain.

Notice the affection: "The son **whom I love**, listen to him." Jesus is given authority. Sonship and authority are hand and hand: sonship is available to all who follow Jesus. His followers receive his status as a son: we become a brother to Jesus! It's for both men and women even though *sonship* (the word) reveals the privilege of the oldest son. It was expected that he would have authority and have the bulk of the inheritance and a place of intimacy with the father. Jesus steps into this and fully carries out what this means to be a son and have authority based on intimacy. Jesus shares his sonship with us (Ephesians says we are adopted as God's sons). Jesus has authority and is the head of his body, the church. We have what he has: intimacy and authority.

Here are some other verses about this:

- "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"
Romans 8:14-15 ESV

- "... for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
Galatians 3:26 ESV

This is true for men women, slaves and free, and for Jew and Gentile. It doesn't change who you are: you are still the same but your status in the spiritual realm has changed.

The encounter with Jesus:

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked. A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

Mark 9:14-18

Notice the theme of sonship: we had God the Father speaking over Jesus and affirming his authority, and in Mark 9, we have a father helpless to help his son who has no control over his own body and is unable to communicate. This is sonship: This is Jesus stepping into the healing of sonship in a family.

Jesus says:

“You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

Jesus is legitimately frustrated. Jesus was with God at the first mountain-top experience and has walked with these people who will not walk as sons in the world and live out their first purpose. When he asks “how long?” he's talking about

thousands of years. He's headed to the cross to hand himself the power to do what he's always longed to do. This is the “Ancient of Days.”

So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.” Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Mark 9:20-24

Notice Jesus doesn't give the man advice: the man has tried everything. “Keep him away from the fire” is a fix but not a cure. Jesus has a big imagination that thinks about healing from the root.

“I do believe, help me in my unbelief” is a prayer we can pray any time!

Then a mini-resurrection moment happens:

When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

Mark 9:25-29

I think this question from the disciples is very important: we’ve also had many moments where we asked for healing and spiritual things that weren’t answered: Why couldn’t we get these answers? Jesus gives a couple of answers:

He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

1. Matt 17:20 mentions prayer and faith: Because you have so little faith. We can easily make this something it’s not: it’s talking and listening to God. **Prayer is not just talking:** Belonging has to do with both **intimacy** and **authority**: if we

pray for authority, we must also be listening to the heart of the father.

This is prayer: Faith is allegiance to Jesus, our king. It has to do with listening to the Father and a **big imagination**. Faith gets tossed around a lot: We hear “Just have faith.” What does this mean? Faith in what? We have faith in God, the creator of the universe. We have faith that he is who he says he is and that we have the authority to do what he asks in the world.

When we think about prayer and faith, we need to think about intimacy, authority, and imagination .

Testimony:

My experience with this passage: My last real encounter with Mark 9 was at the end of 2020 when I looked at the text's footnote that said "**this kind can only come out by prayer and fasting**" was only in some manuscripts.

I wondered about this and I also noticed that prayer and fasting showed up in the Luke account.

I thought about our *stuck places* at the Village: I wonder if this could apply to the Village and I decided to give fasting a try. I am not a good fast-er: I started with giving up snacks and prayer for an hour (some of you know I like to eat every 3 hours!). Eventually, I would fast one meal a week and pray for a couple of hours. I put papers in a folder that had the names of every adult at the Village. For a little over a year, I fasted and prayed for all of you. I prayed for miracles, for each of your "stuck places."

Over the course of the year, I noticed that I was hearing God's heart for all of you: He was telling me how He loved each of you. I saw your faithfulness to your family and this community. My heart was changed to lean into the heart of God. I did see some miracles, maybe partly because I was looking for them. But the miracles required something of me. Scheduling in fasting regularly helped me develop a rhythm in my life **to do it**.

I also noticed I was inconvenienced about things I could control. Maybe fasting makes me more ready to face things I couldn't control. I've seen many of you *inconvenienced and see miracles*: I have seen lives saved! I have seen trajectories turned:

You gave up your shed, a corner of your backyard, your garage or your car, your couch, a spare room, a seat at a dinner table, an hour at a coffee shop, a place in your family.

I've seen children protected from harm.

I've seen healing.

I've seen you take what you had and give it away, listening to the father's heart. There is a story about this about multiplication:

There are different kinds of questions here: (listen again)

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

John 6:5-11

The boy was probably carrying stale bread and fish jerky: it was not glamorous. But Jesus did something with it.

What's in your lunchbox? A corner of your backyard? A conversation?

Imagine!!!

I don't think we really know what's in our lunchbox until we've been walking a pathway of prayer and listening to the Father. **He**

doesn't invite us to give something to everything. We need to remember we are carrying a lunchbox and what God is calling us to share.



What you are asked to share might surprise you and the results might surprise you as well.

Disappointments:

We forget: There are few kinds: we might share our lunch and someone is healed but we still need another miracle. When we are looking for the next miracle that started the whole process: we forget about the first miracle. Someone is healed: God did a miracle and we forget.

We don't see answers: Example: Last month, Rod was in the hospital with an inflamed foot. I was bold and prayer for him to walk out of the hospital the next day and go on his 50th anniversary with his wife. Rod did get better but it didn't happen the quick way I asked for. For the next week I was hesitant to pray and I was *disappointed*. I thought God didn't listen and answer prayer.

But what did the disciples do when they couldn't heal? ***They asked Jesus***. We are to make space for grief and we are waiting for something in the future when Jesus makes all things new. This is a place of intimacy with God to tell him about our disappointments. We need to **persevere** through faith and **ask Him** why things don't happen. It might be about us or something else. **We need to tend to the good:** I need to remember Rod in the hospital who did get better and he did go on an anniversary trip.

Healing the City one Person at a Time:

1. **Practice belonging** (Jesus took moments with individuals to belong to them: this is part of the not-advice-giving but instead ask questions that he may have know the answers to

already)...he stepped in, engaged in the moment, and belonged to the father and to each other. We need to show up in all the different ways each week. .

2. **Remember:** Who Jesus is and who he says we are and the miracles we have seen.
3. **Imagine:** What restoration in the world looks like
4. **Listen** to the heart of God and each other
5. **Share our Lunch:** Be ready to share what we have.

Comments;

We miss the little miracles, the little bunnies that run up and down the street.

Imagination: tapping into God's infinite creativity to solve an issue

Identify: Beloved means literally "son of my love." The object of their affection. This deepens my sense of who I am.

The idea of being inconvenienced to step into things is challenging, also the invitation to fast.