

Wednesday May 3, 2006
Service of Healing and Holy Communion
Homily by The Rev. Timothy A. Leitzke

A Church that is not into healing ministry is not a Christian Church.

Healing is why we are here. Healing is God's work, and as God's children we are called to carry out God's work in the world. That's what Peter and John do. They see a crippled beggar by the temple. They see a man, not a faceless opportunity to do good deeds and earn points with Jesus, and they offer him real, effective healing. Peter and John, as God's faithful children, instruct him, "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazirite, walk." They touch him, taking him by the hand, and they set him on his own two feet. He is crippled no more.

Stories like this one have, through the years, buoyed all sorts of fanatical evils such as the rejection of science and medicine or the peddling of pay-per-pray faith cures. Peter is quick to correct any such urge. He immediately ties this miraculous event to the life and ministry of Christ. "Jesus Christ" is not a magic word. Speaking it, exclaiming it in religious fervor, or growling it at jerks in the roundabout on Route 35 is not going to make things go your way. (It might make you feel better, especially if the jerk nearly caused an accident, but it's not going to do any good.) The power of Christ's name rests in its faithful use by Christ's disciples in the furtherance of Christ's ministry. The name "Jesus Christ" is effective when we use it in faith to continue Christ's ministry.

Peter's speech to those who gather is not a clutch at personal gain. It is not a cry for fanatics to go out and blow up the hospital. Peter's cry is "Turn to God!"

Seek your salvation in Christ. Find your healing in Jesus. God raised Jesus the Christ from the dead, and God daily raises you. Just look at the crippled beggar. He's been resurrected in a small way, in a dim reflection of the resurrection that awaits us. The faith of Christ is powerful. When you get a taste of it watch out because all heaven could break loose.

Friends of Christ the resurrection—the power to heal—is the power of the Gospel, the good news that God raised Jesus the Christ from the dead. We, the Church of Christ, are here to continue the work of the Gospel, the ministry of healing, that is the heart of the Christian life.

This is a Healing Service, and we are here tonight to receive healing from God through Jesus the Christ. We are here to receive the Gospel, the Good News that God loves us and has loved us since the foundation of the cosmos, that in Jesus the Christ God was at work healing this world, and that when the world turned against Jesus God remained faithful to Jesus—and to the world, though we didn't know it at the time—and raised Jesus the Christ to eternal life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the life that was in Christ, we have faith in this good news, we are gathered as brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are given the promise of the resurrection. God does not just speak these words flippantly. They don't spill out of the mouth as gibberish. They come to us personally.

God takes on human form, in Jesus, in Peter and John, in doctors and nurses, in family members, in friends, in enemies, in total strangers, in our brothers and sisters, God's children, and speaks, "look at us. I see you. I see your

face. I see who you are, and I love you for who you are. I don't have magic potions to give you. I have Good News. I have the story of Jesus the Christ, raised from the dead. I give you life. I forgive your sins. I make you righteous. I am with you in everything you do. Nothing, no matter how frightening or painful or depressing, can separate you from me. When you are dead and gone and everyone has forgotten who you are and who you loved, I will remember, and on the last day I will raise you imperishable. You will be with me forever. Have faith."

God talks with us in prayer. God invites us to share our deepest concerns, to voice our most nagging frustrations, and to air our grievances. God listens while we ask for God to be with us in the midst of pain. God answers in ways, often unnoticed, and too many and magnificent to be listed here. God comes to us as light. In the darkest places, in the deepest shadows, in the most ominous unknowns, and in the inky blackness of fear God shines. God overcomes the darkness. God shines so brightly that nothing can extinguish the flame. We light our candles as signs that even in the darkest corners of our lives God is lighting the way for us. God touches us in oil. We cannot overstate the healing power of touch. Peter and John touched the crippled beggar and lifted him to his feet. God touches us in oil and lifts us to new life. At many times and in many places we are down, but because of God we are never out; God raises us so that we can walk through life.

God feeds us in Holy Communion. We come to the table and God feeds us. We eat and drink forgiveness, healing and the promise of resurrection. God fuels

us for the challenges we face. Having fed us, God sends us. We don't have to go home but we can't stay here. Our life as Christians takes place in worship *and* outside of worship. Worship shapes us for life. In a similar manner our healed and resurrected lives take place outside of this Healing Service. Friends of Christ you are healed; live as though you are healed. Live as people changed forever by the Gospel, the Good News that God loves us, has always loved us, and will always love us, and that God is still at work in the world, healing us.

That Good News is the power of God to make all things new. It is the story of God's involvement with people even before there *were* people. It's not just a story to tell to pass the time or pass on the values of a bygone or imagined era. It is God's healing power, made real in the telling. Healing is God's work. Healing is why we are here. Christ's Church *is* a place of healing. Amen