

The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa

June 10, 2007
I Kings 17:17-24
Galatians 1:11-24
Luke 7:11-17

Last Sunday, Bishop Jim Kelsey of the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan, the upper peninsula, was killed in a car accident in near Marquette. Bishop Kelsey was 54, a husband and a father of three children. Perhaps because of the suddenness of his death, perhaps because of his age, perhaps because of the fact that we spend so much time in the UP, and perhaps for many other reasons as well, I have been reading some of the articles about his death and funeral as well as some of the postings on a memorial page set up by the diocese of Northern Michigan.

What has struck me is the wide variety of memories that people had of Bishop Kelsey. Some recall of his love for singing in church or in the car, whether he knew a song or not. Others recall his love of his family, his wife and his children, even his love of his dog. Some recall his love for the people of the diocese, his love of the New York Yankees. Others recall the passions that drove his ministry as bishop: His passion for inclusivity, for caring for the earth and for discovering the gifts for ministry given to all persons in their baptism.

As I read these postings, these articles it occurred to me that every one of us, like Jim Kelsey are known and will be remembered differently by those who know and love us. Perhaps some will remember your sense of humor, some will remember those areas of expertise, others areas where you lacked any talent whatsoever. Some will remember you for your loves and your passions; others for those things that you perhaps despised. Each of us are known and loved and will be remembered differently by different people.

Such was the case of Jesus as well. Not only during his life on earth, but in the centuries since, he has been known and loved and remembered differently by those who follow, preach, and read about him.

Some remember a man of deep prayer and holiness, some a man with compassionate love for children, widows, outcasts and sinners. Some remember a man of courage who stood up to those in power; some, a great and charismatic teacher.

One thing remembered consistently in the Gospels, and in the writings, preaching about Jesus through the centuries is the memory of Jesus was the healer. There are dozens and dozens of accounts in the Gospels of Jesus healing. Jesus healed men and women, young and old, Jew and non Jew. Sometimes he healed by touching, sometimes by speaking. Sometimes Jesus healed a person who was in close proximity. Sometimes Jesus healed those who were far a way. .

The healing ministry of Jesus was a sign that in his person, in his body the healing power of God was present. In Jesus, the healing presence of God had burst forth and was alive in the world in a unique and powerful way. After Pentecost, the Spirit of Jesus continued to heal through the words and actions of Jesus disciples. In the history of the Church, through hundreds and thousands of years, the followers of Jesus continue his healing ministry.

As part of our liturgy this morning we will celebrate the laying on of hands and anointing for the sick. We will pray for those in need of healing in our congregation, and indeed throughout the world. We will pray for those engaged in vocations dedicated to healing. We will pray that God's healing spirit will come upon those we pray for and those we anoint. As we pray for these people, we acknowledge that each and every one of us is in need of healing; every one of us has areas of life that need to be restored and made whole. Some are in need of physical healing; some emotional. Some families are torn and broken. Some need financial healing. Some need healing from addictions. Some have relationships at work, in the home, here in church that need healing. Some need healing from the pain of grief. Some need healing from things done or said to others. Some need healing from pains they have caused to themselves. Some need healing in their relationship with God.

Jesus himself also needed healing. No doubt as one who was fully human, Jesus suffered many of the physical illnesses common to his day. He was not immune to physical or emotional illness. He needed healing from loss and grief. He grieved when loved ones died. He wept. He needed healing when those closest to him, his own family misunderstood him. He needed healing when his followers turned away, when his own people rejected him, and when those close to him betrayed, denied and abandoned him. Jesus needed healing from the fears, disappointments and pains that are part of human life. Jesus reveals the truth that to be human is to need healing.

To be human is to need healing from death. Jesus shared fully in that aspect of human life as well. Everything created everything given life will one day die. By God's gracious and steadfast love, we can even be healed from death. Healing does not prevent death, even Jesus died. But healing can restore life after death. This hope filled belief is central to the Christian faith.

By God's grace filled love, everything and everyone that is broken and dies can be healed, made whole and restored to life.

For the healing power of God present in Jesus, we give thanks.

But there is more. Always in the blessings of God, there is abundantly more.

God continues to heal the world in our day. God heals the world not in the person of Jesus, but in and through those on whom the spirit of God rests. God continues to heal the world in and through you. You are the bearers of God's healing spirit in the world today.

The healing spirit of God at work in Jesus was also at work before Jesus in the people of Israel. The spirit of healing we heard about today in our reading about Elijah. Elijah cried out to the Lord to revive the widow's son. Like Elijah, the Spirit works through us as well. At your baptism the healing Spirit was poured upon you so that through you, God can bring healing to the world today. Does this mean that each of us individually has this power? No. But together, together, together, when we have the courage, trust and humility to pool our unique gifts for the common good we can bring healing to the world.

Elijah shows us a first step in healing. When he says to the widow, "Give me your son" Elijah takes responsibility for the child's healing.

"Give me your son". Do we have the courage to take and share responsibility for bringing healing to our community and to a world so ill, that like the widow's son, there is no "breath of life."

Do we have the courage to say, "Give us your daughters and sons who are suffocating in despair that through the Spirit of God within us, God may heal them".

Do we have the courage to say, "Give us your sons and daughters who are victims of neglect and violence that through the Spirit of God within us, God may heal them".

Do we have the courage to say, "Give us your sons and daughters who suffer and die because of the ravages of poverty that through the Spirit of God within us, God may heal them".

Do we have the courage to say, "Give us the sons and daughters of Darfur, of Africa, of Iraq and the Middle East, of Grand Rapids and of this and every nation on earth give us your daughters and sons who are young or old. Give us your sons and daughters who are even not yet born, those daughters and sons who will need the clean air and water that only a healed earth will offer. Give us your sons and daughters that through the Spirit of God within us, God may heal them."

Through us, we who have been healed and are being healed, God wills to bring healing to all the sons and daughters of creation. Through us God can heal all that has been broken and restore to life all that is dead.

Through us, if we accept responsibility, as God's beloved sons and daughters for God beloved sons and daughters, all can be healed.

For the healing God is accomplishing in us, we give thanks.

For the healing God wants to accomplish through us; when God asks us to share responsibility for the healing of God's daughters and sons; may we have the courage to say "Yes".