

Jesus

AS HEALER



Art 🌿

Edgar Boevé

Meditations 🌿

Timothy Brown
Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.
Leanne Van Dyk
Dewey R. Heetderks, Jr.
Walter Arnold III
Nicholas Wolterstorff
Randall D. Engle
Jack Roeda

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Meditations 

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ARTIST STATEMENT

For the last several years, I have been doing collections of art based upon unifying subjects taken from the Bible. Seeing my series of Jesus' parables, a friend suggested to me the subject of "Jesus as Healer." This idea struck me profoundly. The churches I'm a member of both hold healing services and of course every prayer uttered includes a plea for health and healing. I have chosen seven examples of healing by Jesus of individuals and one example of Jesus healing the many. The following are they.

The fabrics in each example of healing were chosen to convey visually the setting of each event. For example, the healing of both Simon Peter's mother-in-law and the raising of Jairus' daughter undoubtedly occurred in a bed. The mother-in-law's bed is interpreted with homespun yarns to suggest blankets. Since Jairus is introduced as a leader, his daughter's bed is pictured as more elegant in delicate raw silks in pastel colors. Jairus' robe is in raw silk with gold threads.

The healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda uses fabrics with silver and aqua to interpret the disturbed water. Since the pool of Bethesda is described in architectural terms, fabrics of stones, bricks with columns establish the setting for the healing. This is also described with a distant sky as the healed paralytic, carrying his mat, anticipates new life.

The textures of the healing of the demonic possessed man convey his volatile world. The red and yellow explosive background dramatizes the clenched hands having broken their chains. The demons that lodge in the swine tumble over a cliff into a great splash of water, turning bloody and finally muddy as they drown.

Jesus' hands are always cuffed in fabric to convey homespun; however, a raw silk is used in the hem of his clothing for the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage.

Homespun robes for the man deaf and mute and the man born blind may appear rough; however, they also include heavy, raw silk. Their hair is made of yarns.

All the hands and faces are created with ultra suede which has been painted.

Hopefully the colors and textures of each healing will add to the healings' holy meaning.

Edgar Boevé 

Simon Peter's mother-in-law

MATTHEW 8.14-15

¹⁴When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; ¹⁵he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him.

MARK 1.29-31

²⁹As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

LUKE 4.38-39

³⁸After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. ³⁹Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.



HE CAME... HE SAW... HE HEALED...

Suetonius, a Roman historian, says that the victory processions of Julius Caesar always included a banner held high reading: "I came. I saw. I conquered." Jesus' disciples surely could have held another banner proclaiming: "He came. He saw. He healed."

Matthew, Mark and Luke each tell us of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. Typical of Matthew, it comes as a fulfillment of prophecy, typical of Mark it happens immediately, and typical of Luke, the beloved physician, he comments about the type of fever she had. They all, however, tell us that Jesus came, saw, and healed.

"He came. He saw. He healed."

Precisely because he is a living Lord, what he performed on the pages of the gospels then he eagerly waits to perform on the pages of our lives now.

He came and he comes; then to Simon's house just down the street from the synagogue and now to our houses on the corner of "Hope" and "Longing" where we hammer out our ordinary lives.

He saw and he sees; there the mother-in-law of a friend lying in bed with a burning fever and now everyone whom we love who suffers regardless of what their suffering may be called.

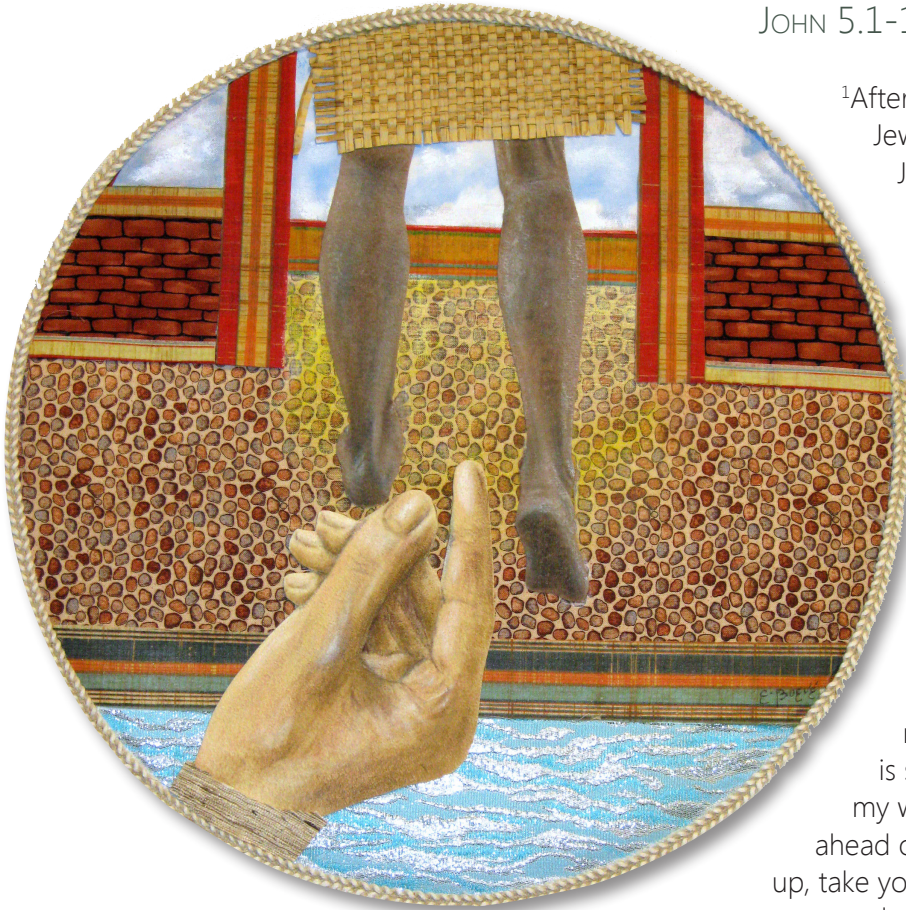
He healed and he heals; then the mother-in-law of Peter with a touch and now everyone whom we dare to anoint with oil, or sustain with a word, or lift high in healing prayer.

He comes. He sees. He heals.

Timothy Brown 

❖ Paralytic at Bethesda ❖

JOHN 5.1-16



¹After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. ³In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. ⁵One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” ⁷The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” ⁸Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” ⁹At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and

began to walk. Now that day was a sabbath. ¹⁰So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” ¹¹But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” ¹²They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’” ¹³Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. ¹⁴Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” ¹⁵The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath.

DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL?

The story of Jesus' healing at Bethzatha (or Bethesda) is part of a larger story in John of Jesus' work on the Sabbath, of the hatred it kindles, and of Jesus' claims to authority and divinity.

I've long been intrigued by Jesus' question of the man at the edge of the pool: "Do you want to be made well?" On first hearing it, we twitch. Why would our Savior ask this poor man such a question? After all, why is the man at the pool? Bethesda is known for just one thing. Healing.

"Do you want to be made well?"

But Jesus wouldn't ask a dumb question, so we need to think. Here's a man in front of him who hasn't walked in thirty-eight years. Maybe Jesus sees a man who is used to his condition. It's part of who he is. He can't imagine life any other way. Maybe this man's answer to Jesus' question would have been perfectly ambivalent—the same as the answer of an addict: Yes and no. Could that be the real reason this man had always lost the race to the pool?

Jesus' question still haunts us. Do you want your old self to die? Do you want to "clean the inside of the cup"? Would you like to lose the anger you're clinging to? Do you want to be made well?

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. 

Demon possessed man

LUKE 8.26-39



²⁶Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"— ²⁹for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) ³⁰Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

³²Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. ³⁴When the swineherds saw

what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. ³⁷Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹"Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

— also see MATTHEW 8.28-34 and MARK 5.1-20

THE OTHER GREAT COMMISSION

For the man possessed by demons, it must have seemed like just another day with the shrieking voices in his head. He was, as usual, wandering around the tombs, alone, shunned, tormented. No one comforted him or ministered to him. But his encounter with Jesus was utterly different. Jesus looked at him directly and first spoke healing words and then words of commission, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you."

The Great Commission in the gospel of Matthew, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" sends us out into the world. But the commission of Jesus in the healing of the demoniac sent him – and sends us – back home to do the hard, patient work of rebuilding and restoring. We see in both commissions that the direction of the gospel is both "out there" and "back home."

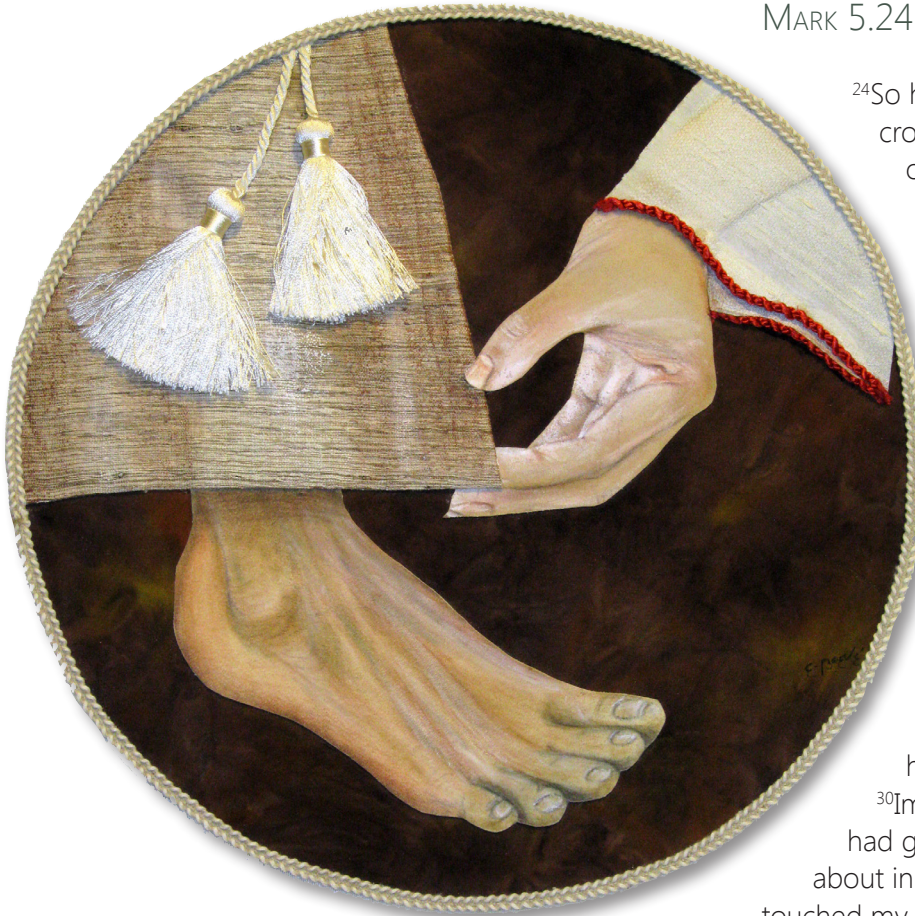
Jesus said to the healed Geresene demoniac, "Return to your home and declare how much God has done for you." And the healed man knew what to declare: Jesus is Lord – not the lords of culture and convention that dictated his rejection. The healed man's witness to the living God would be most powerful not by joining the band of disciples, but by going home, in his right mind.

The heart of the gospel is a brand new reality – the old has gone, behold, the new has come. When Jesus sent out his disciples in the familiar words of the Great Commission, he was sending them out to seed the new. When Jesus sent the healed man back home, he was sending him back to seed the new. In both cases, the leaven of God's future starts to do its yeasty work.

Leanne Van Dyk 

Woman with a hemorrhage

MARK 5.24-34



²⁴So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years.

²⁶She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well."

²⁹Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

³⁰Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" ³¹And his disciples said

to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³²He looked all around to

see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

– also see MATTHEW 9.19-22 and LUKE 8.43-48

CHRIST'S HEALING OF THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLEEDING

Over the years I have had an occasional patient who would report "a miraculous healing." At times the healing involved the management of a life threatening problem. Elation and relief were experienced because "instant healing" had occurred. Unfortunately, the reality of the disease was obscured by the patient's emotions. Science has shown that there is some placebo response in approximately one third of treatment events. Emotions are not an accurate measure of healing.

Christ healed the woman with the chronic issue of bleeding in a miraculous instant. The ministry of Jesus Christ was made credible to the people by the miracles he performed. He said, "Even though you do not believe me believe the miracles that you may know and understand" (John 10:25 and 38). Also, the apostles performed instant miracles of healing for the same reason, credibility. The woman who touched Christ's garment illustrates several truths. She came to Christ in faith. She did not know the outcome, but her faith was exemplary. We too, must come to our Lord in faith, not knowing the outcome. Also, she lived out her faith by coming to the Lord and touching the hem of his garment. In prayer we too come to the Lord to live out our faith. Our prayer includes God's blessing and healing, limited pain and suffering, peaceful acceptance of outcome, caregiver wisdom, and understanding and proper life closure with loved ones.

Today, healing is experienced as a normal process of the physiological functioning of our bodies. Our organ systems improve and then heal in an orderly manner. However, God controls these mechanisms of healing. Under his divine direction, life and death are determined. In God's supreme wisdom the miraculous processes of healing and life are his prerogative, not ours.

Dewey R. Heetderks, Jr. 

Jarius' daughter

LUKE 8.40-42, 49-56



⁴⁰Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ⁴¹Just then there came a man named Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house, ⁴²for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. As he went, the crowds pressed in on him.

⁴⁹While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer." ⁵⁰When Jesus heard this, he replied, "Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved." ⁵¹When he came to the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. ⁵²They were all weeping and wailing for her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping."

⁵³And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴But he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" ⁵⁵Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat.

⁵⁶Her parents were astounded; but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.

– also see MATTHEW 9.18-19, 23-26 and MARK 5.21-23, 35-43

JESUS RAISES THE DAUGHTER OF A RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE

Jairus is described as a ruler of the synagogue. He is named for one of the judges God raised up to deliver Israel in a time of crisis. Yet Jairus is the one who finds himself in need of rescue. He runs to find the Rabbi, who has been doing 'messianic' things. Jesus' signs and wonders recalled for Jairus the signs and wonders of Moses and Elijah and Elisha. There may have been much he did not understand about Jesus' life and ministry, but he knew Jesus' reputation as one who healed and rescued people in distress.

As he approached the Savior, Jesus responded to his plea, and on the way they were waylaid by the woman with the issue of blood. By the time Jesus had healed her and sent her on her way, the terrible news of the death of Jairus' daughter reached them. Surely Jairus was heartbroken. Surely he must have wondered if only that woman had not stopped Jesus...might his daughter have lived? But Jesus tells the man to "Fear not...only believe!"

Jesus enters a house where a dead body lay. This act would have rendered Him unclean. He enters anyway. He dismisses the mourners' claim that the child is dead, and declares she is only sleeping. They laugh at Him as He puts them outside. Jesus goes to the little girl's body and takes her by the hand – nothing could render a person more unclean than to touch a dead body – but Jesus takes her by the hand and speaks to her saying, "Talitha cumi", which means "little girl, I say to you, arise!" AND SHE DID! According to Ezekiel 36 and 37 the quintessential sign of the Age to Come was resurrection, life from the dead. The prophet predicted that a day would come when God would intervene to rescue his people, cleanse them of their uncleanness, and raise them from death. As Mark recalls Peter's preaching in his gospel, he relates that those great and precious promises were kept in and through Jesus. He is keeping them still!

Walter Arnold III 

Deaf and mute man

MARK 7.31-37



³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³²They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." ³⁵And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

THE HEALING OF THE MAN WHO WAS DEAF AND WITH A SPEECH IMPEDIMENT

The healings performed by Jesus have often been treated as proofs of his divinity. The context within which Mark placed his report of the healing of the man who was deaf and with a speech impediment invites us to think along different lines.

"Hear me, all of you," said Jesus to the crowd, "there is nothing outside a person which by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile." The disciples later asked him what he meant. "Do you not see," replied Jesus, "that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft" and the like. "All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Jesus was engaged in a dispute with the Pharisees. The word "Pharisee" has become a synonym of "hypocrite"; and Jesus did indeed charge the Pharisees with hypocrisy. But the hypocrisy of the Pharisees occurred within the context of their distinct form of spirituality; it's important to understand that spirituality.

Central to the spirituality of the Pharisees was an intense concern to avoid religious defilement. One becomes religiously defiled by, among other things, freely associating with non-Jews or by touching human beings or eating animals that are malformed or imperfect. Such creatures do not reflect the holiness of God. They are unclean. To touch or eat them is to become defiled.

Jesus flatly rejects this notion of defilement. "He declared all foods clean," says Mark. Defilement does not come from outside by way of what one touches or eats; defilement is on the inside. One is religiously defiled not by what goes into one's stomach but by what comes out of one's heart.

What we now expect is some examples of Jesus associating with religious outcasts, welcoming them into the new community that he has come to form. And we do indeed get two such examples, the story of Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman whose child is demon possessed, and the story of Jesus and the deaf man with a speech impediment.

But the examples explode our expectations. Jesus does not assure the Syro-Phoenician woman, an outsider to the Jewish people, that she too is a member of God's people, and then urge her to be content with the condition of her daughter; he heals her daughter of her demon possession. He does not assure the deaf man with a speech impediment that he too is a member of God's people, and then urge him to be content with his condition; he heals him – heals him by touching his ears and his tongue, thereby, in the eyes of the Pharisees, making himself defiled.

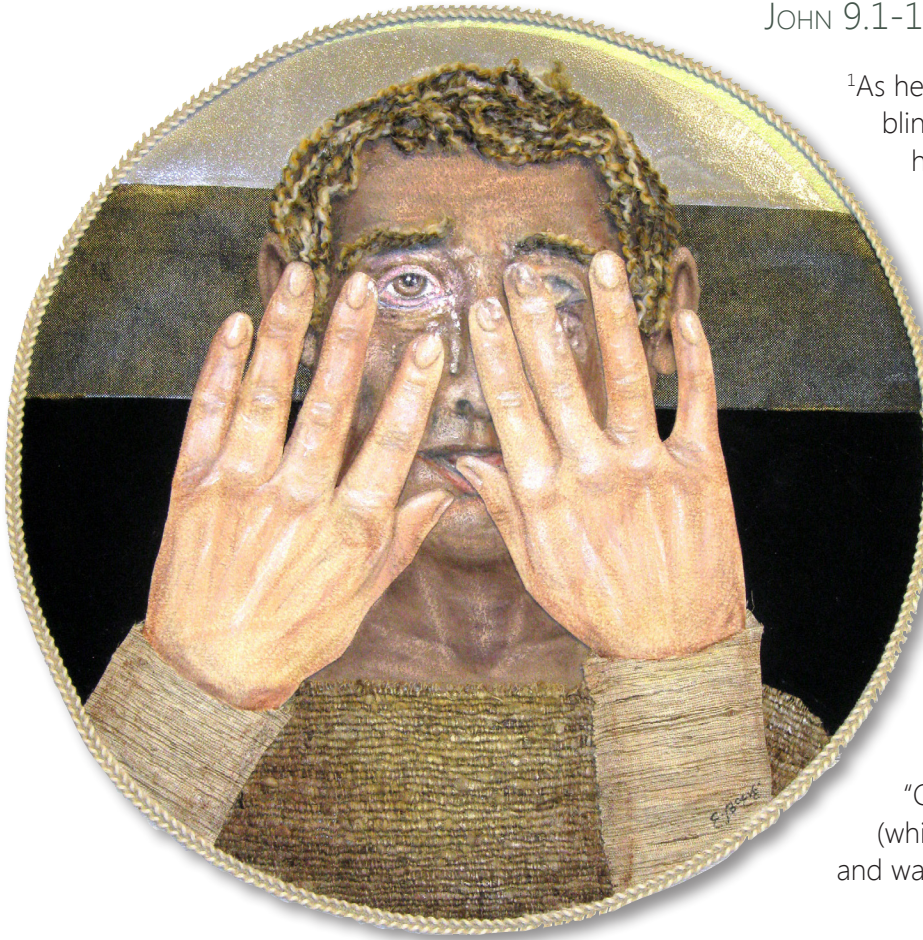
In healing the child and the man of their infirmities, Jesus affirms not only their longing for inclusion but their longing for healing. Not only their religious exclusion but their infirmity is a sign of something gone awry in God's world. Jesus has come to repair what has gone awry. Never does Jesus instruct the infirm who are brought to him to be content with their infirmity.

And so it is that the followers of Jesus not only welcome the excluded into the holy community, but they also work and pray for the healing of their infirmities. They do not avoid touching lest they become defiled; they touch, both to embrace and to heal.

Nicholas Wolterstorff 

❧ *Man born blind* ❧

JOHN 9.1-12



¹As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

HOW JESUS SEES

The ninth chapter of John's gospel, with a record 41 verses of narrative for a healing, is traditionally entitled "Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind." Surely this passage narrates a miraculous healing, but the story is also about how Jesus "sees." Boevé wisely understands this and so, unlike the other parables in the series, this healing is shown from Jesus' perspective.

Jesus first sees this blind man's debilitating affliction, and then sees the maddening arrogance of the supposedly religious as they query why the man was blind. Disregarding the theological haggling, Jesus anoints the man's eyes with a tender baptismal gesture and orders him to wash in the "Pool of the One who has been sent." With healed sight, the man now sees his Lord (with his eyes) and proclaims Jesus Messiah (with his heart).

The healing and testimony cause an uproar. Local religious "experts" harden their hearts, doubt the miracle's validity, and ironically reject the evidence before their very own eyes – that the blind man can see! John's storytelling is masterful: while the "sinful" blind man moves from darkness to light (literally and spiritually) the "religious" move in contrary motion. In fact, the closing lines declare that they are the ones who remain blind and muddled.

May we learn again from Jesus who saw with both eye and heart. With the expression of the seeing-man-born-blind so astonishingly captured by Boevé against a background that ascends from dark to light, may we likewise cry: Lord, now I see . . . and I believe.

Randall D. Engle 

Healing the many

LUKE 6.12-19



¹²Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: ¹⁴Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. ¹⁷He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

– there are almost twenty situations of group healings with several recorded in the gospels; also see ACTS 10.36-38, JAMES 5.13-16 and 1 CORINTHIANS 12.1-11, 27-31

HEALING THE MANY

While in the far country, " (the younger son) ... began to be in need; he longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said..."I will set out and go back to my father" (Luke 15:14-18).

Mary Karr, a novelist and recovering alcoholic, gives an updated version of this "coming to his senses" when she relates the testimony of a woman at an AA meeting.

The guy at the front calls on a lady in a bouclé Chanel suit, complete with gold buttons and long chains hanging down. She might've stepped from the pages of Town & Country magazine. She relates how she used to tuck her vodka bottle inside a turkey carcass stashed in the basement freezer. While cooking dinner, she'd run down and yank it out and guzzle a bit. And her family, who'd done two interventions, kept rifling laundry hampers and closets, looking to no avail for her stash. Then one night, she tells us in a demure voice, the frost had built up so deep she couldn't midwife the bottle out, so she just upended the whole bird, guzzling out of it.

She says, and that was my moment of clarity, thinking, other people just don't drink like this (Lit: A Memoir, pp. 191, 192).

A moment of clarity, it is a gift of grace. Once, in a worship service, the people confessed, "There is no health in us." After the service someone said to me in mild protest, "That seems a bit harsh, don't you think? I mean, no health!?" It is harsh, but is it not true?

It is our need that sets us on the way to Jesus; it is this need that sets Jesus on the way to us.

"He came down...and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them" (Luke 6:17-19).

May his power make us whole.

Jack Roeda 

NOTES / PRAYER REQUESTS

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Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

These meditations, and accompanying *Jesus as Healer DVD* narrated by Edgar Boevé, are designed for use in small group Bible study or personal devotions. Prof. Boevé served as a presenter in the early years of the annual Calvin Symposium on Worship, and the Worship Institute is grateful for the ways he has demonstrated how the arts have so much to offer the Christian community and corporate worship.

Visit the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship web site for resources that promote and encourage artistic expression that deepens public worship. Also see the web for additional worship-related, Bible study materials.

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