

Worship Service

BY DAVID G. MILLER

Prelude

Healing is impossible in loneliness;
it is the opposite of loneliness.
Conviviality is healing.
To be healed we must come with all the other creatures
to the feast of Creation.†

Wendell Berry

Invocation

Creator of Life, Creator of our lives,
together, we turn to you.
Hear and heal us, Lord, we pray.
Giver of love, Lover of our lives,
together, we reach out to you.
Hear and heal us, Lord, we pray.
Restore us to wholeness,
give us your shalom.
**We are fragmented and fragile,
frightened and frail.**
In your salvation is healing for our souls and bodies.
Together, we rest in you for newness of life.

Processional Hymn

“Come, Ye Disconsolate”

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,
come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure!

Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
"Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot cure."

Here see the bread of life, see waters flowing
forth from the throne of God, pure from above.
Come to the feast of love; come, ever knowing
Earth has no sorrow but heaven can remove.

Thomas Moore (1816), adapted by Thomas Hastings (1831)
Tune: CONSOLATOR

Morning Collect (Unison)

God of mercy, God of wholeness,
we bow before you,
bent, battered, bruised, and broken.
Through the power of your spirit
and through the power of your word,
we pray that you would hear our prayers
and receive our praise.
Help us, heal us, hold us closer to you
so that we may live. Amen.

The Witness of the Old Testament: 2 Kings 5:1-15a

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy." When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in

Israel." So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Confessional Hymn

"There Is a Balm in Gilead"

*There is a balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole;
there is a balm in Gilead
to heal the sin-sick soul.*

Some times I feel discouraged,
and think my work's in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit
revives my soul again.

Refrain

If you can't preach like Peter,
if you can't pray like Paul,
just tell the love of Jesus,
and say he died for all.

Refrain

Traditional African American Spiritual

Prayer of Confession

Peace be with you

And also with you

Let us confess our sins before the Lord
and receive pardon and forgiveness,
the healing of our souls.

(All): God, we confess to you our sins.

We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We have not even loved ourselves.

**Instead we have gambled our health, ignored right living,
and chosen indulgence over discernment.**

We have separated ourselves from your body.

We have even divided ourselves and fragmented our lives

We also confess, then,

that we have divided body from soul,

believing we could live as we wished without hurting our spirits.

From this division, we need your healing;

we need your wholeness.

God, you embodied yourself in a human body.

**You lived out your life among those who were sick
physically, mentally, and spiritually.**

You reached out to touch them,

spoke words to comfort them,

performed miracles to heal them.

Heal us we pray from the sinsickness that grips us.

Restore us to wholeness.

Heal us and help us to work

for the healing and wholeness of our neighbors as well.

Just speak the word of your peace,

and we shall be healed. Amen.

Here these words of assurance:

“The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”

Sisters and brothers, through the work of Jesus Christ
our sins have been forgiven.

The Witness of the New Testament: James 5:7-15

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen

your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Above all, my beloved, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "Yes" be yes and your "No" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Prayers of the People

"The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective."

We bring one another before the mercy seat of God,
bearing one another's burdens,
remembering one another's needs,
strengthening those who are weak.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

*As individuals in the congregation voice the names of people for prayer,
they will pray, "Lord, in your mercy"
and the congregation will respond, "Hear our prayer."*

God, hear the prayers of your people.

Where it is possible,

help us to be gifted to answer these prayers as your body on earth.

Where it is impossible for us to be,

move through your spirit to bring comfort and help
and hope and healing and wholeness.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Amen.

Offertory Sentence

Offer before the Lord your tithe and your portion.
Offer before the Lord your whole life.
Give freely, give joyfully, for the Lord loves a cheerful giver.

The Offering is received.

Hymn of Preparation

"Silent Faces"

Terry W. York, ASCAP (2007)

Tune: UNDER THE BRIDGE

(text and tune pp. 47-49 in this volume)

The Witness of the Gospel: Matthew 8:1-17

(All standing)

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the servant was healed in that hour.

When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

The gospel of our Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Gospel Response

"Gloria Patri"

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen, Amen.

Traditional

Tune: GLORIA PATRI

Sermon

Hymn of Response

"Lord God of Hosts, Whose Mighty Hand"

Lord God of hosts, whose mighty hand
dominion holds on sea and land,
in peace and war your will we see
shaping the larger liberty;
nations may rise and nations fall,
your changeless purpose rules them all.

For those who weak and broken lie
in weariness and agony,
Great Healer, to their beds of pain
come, touch and make them whole again.
O hear a people's prayers, and bless
your servants in their hour of stress!

For those to whom the call shall come,
we pray your tender welcome home;
the toil, the bitterness, all past,
we trust them to your love at last.
O hear a people's prayers for all
who, nobly striving, nobly fall!

For those who minister and heal,
and spend themselves, their skill, their zeal,
renew their hearts with Christlike faith,
and guard them from disease and death;
and in your own good time, Lord, send
your peace on earth till time shall end.

William A. Dunkerley
Tune: LEST WE FORGET

Benediction

From here we walk in God's love always and forever.

We who are being healed can offer hope.

From here we step out into the world.

We who are being restored can offer relief.

From here we move forward to be God's hands and God's feet.

We who are being saved can offer service to those still in need.

Here our service begins.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

NOTE

† Wendell Berry, "The Body and the Earth," in Norman Wirzba, ed., *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2002), 99.



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