

Oct 22, 2023

Pr. Steve

Texts: Philippians 4: 2-9; Luke 11: 9-13

In the name of God, Abba/Imma, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Aloha. Some of us in the congregation had a long and special friendship with Jose Flores, who was from Guam, and that was his heart word, his mantra wherever Jose showed up. Aloha—the spirit of God, that peace of God be with you.

I'm inviting the Healing Prayer members to join me up here to share a brief word with you this morning. And as they are in transit coming this way, I just want to share a word with you that all of these people have been trained in depth, however many years ago with Dr. Fran Geddes. They spent a month of weekends [with Fran], and worked throughout that month, training in the depths of what it means to be present with people in prayer. They bring profound contributions to us and it's part of the foundation of Peace. And so for today, I've asked them to respond briefly to one question, "What has drawn you to Healing Prayer?"

What's drawn you to Healing Prayer, Catherine?

[Faint sound.] (One sec. Nope. We're getting it now. Try to get mic 2. There we go.)

Catherine: Mine is very simple. About 17 years ago, I had very severe cancer and was housebound for two years. And this congregation supported me through the whole healing process. There were Healing Prayers done all over me and it was miraculous. I am a testament to what Healing Prayer does. And thank you God, and thank you this community, and thank you for Healing Prayer.

Charlene: My response to this [question] is similar. When we were asked to think about being up here today, my first thought was that 'Well, duh, Healing Prayer heals me.' So, then I thought, 'Well that sounds a little bit selfish. So maybe I can find some better words.' And lo and behold, yesterday as I was reading my little daily devotional [Christ in Our Home], the words were there. The entry was called, 'Connected in Prayer'. One of the lines says,

It's a powerful gift to receive loving, personal, hands-on prayer. Being prayed for reminds us we are truly seen by God, the Spirit accompanies us, and we are given to one another as signs of divine love.

And then Paul writes,

Holding before God the lives, needs, and faith of others it turns out, blesses us as well. We see the depth and breadth of God's faithfulness, the truth that the Spirit's work never ceases, even when it's out of our sight. Praying for others shapes our faith too.

So, it turns out it's okay to be selfish about prayer.

Libby: I came to Peace in 2010, and that was after Healing Prayer had started here. I asked to be trained, and Pastor Margareta trained me. (She had been trained by Fran Geddes.) And the reason

I asked to be trained in Healing Prayer was I had personally read the gospels when I was in high school, and I felt the spirit of love in the gospels, the spirit of love that Jesus showed to the people that he was with, and the people that he healed. It was overwhelming. I think as a teenager, I was always looking to understand love, and that was what I heard and saw in the gospels. What I did notice, though, was that even though the Christian church has followed Jesus, we had lost a lot of the aspect of healing in the Christian church. I was so delighted to find that Peace was trained [in Healing Prayer] and had Healing Prayer regularly for the people who come here. That is what attracted me to Healing Prayer. It carries on that aspect of Jesus' ministry, and it's the ministry that we are part of at Peace.

Diana: I usually am in my head. It's just a constant, and I do appreciate the Aloha and the opening up of the heart space. In the training that we had with Fran Geddes, he would have us sit and we'd have a flame that we would look at. And, of course, usually then I'm thinking and so forth, but the practice was that with this monkey mind—as they call it—that if a thought would enter, you just let it kind of pass you by in a canoe, and just let it go down the stream. Just let it go. Don't dwell on it. And that was a really good training for me, although I'm not very disciplined. But when I was thinking about it more specifically, for me it seemed that Healing Prayer is a process that creates an opening, an opening in time and space where the Holy Spirit can be present, where truth can be spoken and heard, and a connection is made that allows someone to feel truly cared for, and to feel the relief of a burden being lifted. So, kind of as Charlene mentioned, for me it's not about the words. It's more so about the connection that takes place.

Pr. Steve. Thank you. If you want to learn more, talk with these friends about Healing Prayer. And, if you want to become part of the team, talk to me.

Pr. Steve. In case you haven't noticed, the times are overwhelming. Discouragement abounds in the news—disasters, disputes that go unresolved—and the temptation is for us to shut down. Boy are we feeling that, aren't we? And to whose advantage is it for us to shut down? Who benefits when we shut down?

The worst is that we become like that hardpack California clay in our hearts. Nothing's getting in. *'You're not going to mess with me. Nothing is going to grow here.'* And spiritual wisdom is all about loosening the soil of your soul. Soften the heart and mind so change and healing can be perceived. Open up. It feels so contrary, doesn't it?

But what's going to happen to me if I lose control? But wait, it's worse. There are people sitting in this congregation this morning who are saying to themselves, *"I don't need healing. I'm tough. I've figured out life. I know what it's about. I don't need to be healed."* Right? You want to put your hands in the air? Or shall I just assume it's everyone. And that's the worst, when we don't even know how sad or bad off we are, and we go on pretending, *'It'll work out.'*

See, healing is all about being healed into the wholeness of who we are—it's not just trying to fix bad times—the wholeness, the beauty of who we are. But we need time for that to happen. We need space, in order to refocus our lives on a different kind of future.

So, here are three ways on how to shift, and focus, and loosen the soil of our souls. The first is to lament. Let it out. *"It hurts. I don't like this. I'm not in control. Somebody fix it!"* But you see when we keep it inside of ourselves, it just crushes us further and further, so we can't see out. We can't see anything else. It's not cool when we live in Paradise to have to admit it's not all perfect.

"Please leave Paradise. The rest of us are doing just fine."

Yeah. Admit it. Lament.

The second thing is to be joyful. I can tell you after all my years of preaching, one thing congregations don't want to hear about is becoming joyful. *"Not that again! Oh, he's asking too much. Sacrifice—you bet. Commitment—count on me."* But to be joyful, that's our inheritance.

Now Mudzunga [Farisani] reminded us two weeks ago that Paul is writing from prison. (They [the Farisanis] know a little bit about prison.) Be joyful. Paul is not referring to the circumstances in which he finds himself. It's the clarity of his own soul that has been nurtured, and that's what's he's encouraging for all of us—for all of us. I know I can't force you to be joyful, but we can allow ourselves to open to it.

Who's stopping you from becoming joyful? It ain't somebody out there. This is why God made Hawaiians! You see from the outside, we go, *'It can't be that simple. I mean, life isn't that easy.'* And, *'What do you mean, this is going to make me feel better?'* What is she talking about? But from the inside, oh where we are right now—breathing freely—we know that ease is possible, and we were made for joy.

The third thing is to pray with persistence. The usual prayer for most of us is *"Help!"* And that's a good prayer. And it's been said there really only two prayers, *'Help!' and 'Thank you'.* But what Jesus is talking about today is that persistence—ask, keep probing, search, seek, pursue. Not just knock on the door—pound on the door until it opens, because what's happening in the process is that we're getting cleared out and cleansed. All the garbage in the way begins to dissolve, because we're looking for a place of hope and transformation.

That's why this dedication. Dedication finally opens for us, on occasion, moments of connection—even saturation—with a peace which the world cannot give. It overflows. It fills and fulfills, and it is, as we've heard, our heart's deepest longing.

Aloha.

We well understand overwhelming misery—that part we get—but we're invited to shape our lives, and to open them to that overflowing mercy, which brings us to life and invites us to embrace and enjoy—joy.

Aloha.

Amen.

The peace which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.