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**On Healing: Every Path Has Its Own Gethsemane**

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We are still in Easter, the rich 50 day dive into the many ways we can talk about new life, Resurrection Life, perhaps the Evangelists might like to name it. (Let’s drop the “of the body” phrase for the moment, so we can talk about the myriad versions of New Life).

When Rachel asked me to preach today, I immediately said, Yes, of course, gladly, and then, out of my mouth popped: “I’d like to talk about healing.” “Wonderful,” she said. Except I hadn’t given it 5 seconds of thought! It just “came out, “ I guess I had agreed.

It has turned out to be really challenging. First, I realized, I have spent the last year in Gethsemane., not in anything much resembling Easter tide. Perhaps you have as well. I’ll talk about that shortly.

Second, the Gospel I immediately looked up is an old favorite of mine, Jesus’ long Teaching at his last Passover Dinner – John 15, where Jesus uses the wonderful metaphor of vine and branch. You have surely heard it many times, as have I. But when I read it again, I was startled and sad to watch myself so blocked by its Father/Son and sin/obedience language. Perhaps I’ve always run a simultaneous translation in my head, when hearing those words, and so could just keep following along. But to actually speak about them must have reminded me of my discomfort, and I got very stuck.

And third, I thought, aside from withered hands and blindness and leprous skin, does the Bible address healing in any sustained way? I almost called Rachel to say, so sorry, I just can’t do this.

Something stubborn in me insisted, though. After all, we know, most of us who pause and consider our lives, know, we need healing. We desperately need healing. The world. The country. Our families. Our selves. And after more than a year of Covid, and all the loss and pain it has wrought, it hardly needs to be said, I’d guess. Nothing seems right, really right, as things ought to be. Everywhere we look, we see all that is broken - something we relied on, something we thought was true, something that shaped our life and perhaps even nourished its meaningfulness, something absolutely essential to our lives as we have known and lived them. Something true we believed about ourselves. No longer to be trusted. Indeed, broken. This has released torrents of fear and anxiety, as well...also acutely in need of healing, but a topic for another time.

In a way, I think, this gives us a sense of what Jesus’ friends were feeling, the days after his death, the catastrophe of that particular Passover in Jerusalem. They must have been drenched in fear, disorientation, confusion, even terror. They huddled together in small rooms with locked doors. They didn’t even know, what the right questions were, much less, any answer that made sense.

We each have our own version of fear and disorientation, of broken heartedness and suffering. Some of us are more skillful than others at hiding or ignoring our grief, but I doubt there are very many of us unaware of our own inner tumult and uneasiness and hurt.

Can we then even talk about healing? Again, not the miraculous cure of a withered hand or blindness, though I would rejoice with anyone who had received such a gift. I’m talking about the hard slog through our own landscapes of pain and suffering, out of which healing emerges. Is there a way to talk about the healing that gives us glimpses of wholeness, for that is what healing really is? Have you noticed moments when you knew you were being offered new life, new ways to imagine yourself in your life? I know profound healing *can* emerge from deep suffering, and I know it *does.*

(I know I am mixing up levels and centuries and body parts and emotional backwaters. I can’t avoid it, without spending hours teasing out all the distinctions.)

We need healing, because we are suffering and we are scared. And we recognize we are pretty powerless and certainly not in control of very much. You see now, why I alerted you, that I would have to begin in Gethsemane, for this is where the great healing becomes possible. There comes a moment, an unforgettable moment which sears itself into our very cells, when we know all those things at once: fear, suffering, and powerlessness to change anything. As a wise elder said to me: “Every path has its own Gethsemane.” Every path.

We see Jesus, who knows what is happening, that armed guards are on the way to take him away. We see him kneeling in the garden, praying with all his heart and soul, to be relieved of the terrifying torture and death that await him, and he cries out to God.

In Luke’s words*: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine.” Then an angel appeared to him, coming from heaven to give him strength. In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.”*  Strength to surrender. Strength to agree. Strength to accept his powerlessness. Strength to be his full and whole self.

It is the perfection of surrender. There is no denial, no refusal, no psychological or emotional shut-down, no false narrative, no self-medicating, no retreat into unconsciousness.

It is the perfection of wholeness. No part of Jesus has been pushed aside or denied. Every single bit of psyche, every single bit of heart and mind are fully present. Nothing has been left out.

It is the perfection of alignment with his deepest Spirit, as he names it, the Son is full of the Father, the Father has poured himself into the Son.

The branch is rooted in the vine, Jesus knows this about himself, that his very being and life are as a branch rooted in the vine of his Father. He uses the same image to teach his friends that they too are branches rooted in the vine that is Jesus, and in that profound relationship with Jesus, his friends are likewise in fulsome relationship with the Father. As Jesus’ being and life are rooted in the life of God, so is theirs. And so are ours. This is the deepest possible experience of wholeness, and it is the healing we long for. It begins in Gethsemane, when small self finally surrenders to Spirit, to the Holy One, to the Source of Life. When each part of you, of me, finally comes into full alignment with our deepest Self, our deepest belonging to the unknowable mystery of the Divine. Surely, this is new life. Surely this is what the word “Resurrection” points to.