

Sermon Title: **“PRAYERS FOR HEALING”**

Bible: **Psalm 46**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, September 27, 2020

Audience: about 25 YouTube Live-streaming viewers

Opening Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, who can banish all affliction both of soul and of body, show forth your power upon those in need, that by your mercy they may be restored to serve you afresh in holiness of living, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1. “Healing Services and Prayers” in the United Methodist Book of Worship

I prepare today’s message, based on “Healing Services and Prayers in *the United Methodist Book of Worship*. That’s because in the United States alone, over 200,000 lives have been lost due to COVID-19. In our congregation, several church members have been diagnosed with cancer. Many of us need healing prayers for our bodies and souls. At the end of this message, we will have a time of a prayer for healing together.

2. “Healing” in New Testament

How do you understand healing? In the New Testament, the word “healing” comes from the Greek word, *sozo*. This Greek word is also used for salvation and wholeness. So, the word for healing in the New Testament means not only physical healing, but also mental and emotional balance, spiritual health, or reconciled relationships between God and human beings, among individuals and communities, within each person, and between human beings and the rest of

creation. I hope that we remember that the main purpose of spiritual healing is to renew and build up our relationship with the living Christ.

3. My Reflection on Introduction of Healing Services and Prayers

I would like to share my reflection upon the introduction of “Healing Services and Prayers” in *the United Methodist Book of Worship*. I believe that **all healing is of God**. This does not mean that we do not need doctors, nurses, or medicine. I also believe that God gives us doctors, nurses, or medicine through our societies. When I was sick, I took medicine and saw a doctor. God can use many people and many things in order to heal us. So, I am thankful for doctors, nurses, and medicine, as well as for God’s healing.

But I know that sometimes healing can happen beyond our medical science. There are many things that we can do. But there are always some things that we cannot do or that we cannot understand. I know a couple of people who have experienced God’s healing. Doctors said that they had done all they could do. All I could do was to pray. With prayers and God’s healing, they were able to recover. I am just thankful for their smile and presence day by day. Yes, **healing is not magic, but it is the great mystery of God’s love.**

God does not promise that we shall be spared suffering but does promise to be with us in our suffering. God’s sustaining presence is with us in pain, sickness, injury, and estrangement. God does not give us the perfect world, pain-free or challenge-free world. Rather than giving us the perfect world, God gave us Godself. I believe that's why God sent us Jesus. Even though Jesus is God, God decided to be a human being and be with us. On the cross, Jesus suffered with us. As a human, Jesus experienced physical, emotional, and spiritual

pain, when he was crucified, when he was betrayed by the disciples, and when he felt forsaken by God. Jesus knows our suffering. This Jesus is with us in our suffering.

God does not promise that we will be cured of all illnesses; and we all must face the inevitability of death. This is not easy to digest. We cannot be younger, but we are getting older. Eventually, we all face death. In the Bible, Jesus raised Lazarus from death to life. But we all know that even Lazarus passed away in the end. We cannot avoid this brutal fact that we all pass away someday. I know that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. But here are my sorrows and my prayers. I pray like Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus who lost their brother. Here and now, I want to weep and cry out to the Lord!

4. Remembering those in God's love like the Pebbles in the Water

There are some traditional ways for the healing prayers, like laying on of hands, anointing with oils, and holding hands. Because healing services are in my mind, at the beginning of this year, I purchased some anointing oils. But during this time, we worship via YouTube. So, I prepare this creative way to pray together. Pebbles means those who need our prayers, and the water means God's love and presence. While mentioning those who need prayers, I will put pebbles into the bowl. Even though I cannot hear you, please say the names that you want to raise in our prayers. Our God will surely hear our prayers.

(While putting the pebbles in the bowl)

We remember those who lost their families, friends, and loved ones, because of COVID-19.

We remember those who fight against COVID-19.

We remember those who are vulnerable during this difficult time.

We remember those who look for social justice.

We remember those who are affected by wildfire, and their families.

We remember those firefighters and first responders who work tirelessly.

We remember those who are diagnosed with cancer, and their families.

We remember those who need our prayers.

(While holding the water jar)

God promises to be with us in our sorrow and suffering.

God's mercy, grace, and healing is upon all of us.

(And then pouring out the water into the bowl)

5. Prayers for healing and wholeness with laying on of hands

Let us lay our hands on each other.

Can you lay one hand on you, and the other hand on others?

(Let us pray) Our sisters and brothers, we lay our hands on each other,

In the name of Jesus, the Christ, our Savior and Healer.

May the power of God's indwelling presence heal us of all illness - of body, mind, spirit, and relationships - that we may serve God with a loving heart. Amen.

Let us remember that God is OUR God. God is with us here and now.

Be still.

Be still and know.

Be still, and know that God is with us.

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, we pray that our sisters and brothers
may be comforted in their suffering and made whole.

When we are afraid, give us courage;

when we feel weak, grant us your strength;

when we are afflicted, afford us patience;

when we are lost, offer us hope;

When we are alone, move us to each other's side;

When death comes, open your arms to receive us.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

REFERENCE

“VIII. HEALING SERVICES AND PRAYERS” from *the United Methodist Book of Worship*