

Good soggy Sunday morning from a hill in Rockport....  
18, 2021

July

Healing is the theme for the day -- wanting it, needing it, offering it, receiving it. What is healing? Different for each of us, isn't it? And yet, it seems we all seek healing from and for many things throughout life. When I was a little girl, it was healing of my knee after I fell off my first two-wheeled bicycle. I still have the scar on my knee as proof of that tumble. When I was a young adult, it was healing after relationships gone awry. When I was older, it was healing after the death of my parents. How about you? What kind of healing do you need right now? My computer Thesaurus says healing can mean "recovery, restoration, recuperation, therapy, treatment, or reinvigoration. Healing is the process of curing or becoming well." I would argue that healing does not necessarily mean curing, but acceptance of what is and moving on when some physical condition, or relationship, or situation cannot be "fixed," but only understood and accepted for what it is. What's your definition of healing?

Thanks for being out there.... in the pews in our sanctuary and in our cyberspace congregation, wherever you are! You remind me of my favorite words of writer and monk, Thomas Merton: "We're not alone. We only imagine that we are."

Read all below, as you wish and will, and remember to be the listening ear, and open heart for someone who reaches out to you for healing.... and, in turn, perhaps they will be there for you, too.....

Blessings and love to all this gray morning where the birds are still "singing in the rain" on a hill in Rockport..... May we learn to do the same in the midst of our gray days..... Susan

p.s. Note that I will not be leading worship and preaching next Sunday, July 25, 2021. Rev. Dick Hanks will be filling the pulpit that morning. Thanks to the congregation for giving me one Sunday a month away from the pulpit! This is NOT a week off.... but a Sunday morning away for me to refresh my body and spirit "in a quiet place"..... once each month. I appreciate this brief respite more than you can know.....

**"the fringe of his cloak"**

**A Sermon for the Federated Church of Thomaston**

**Thomaston, Maine**

**Sunday, July 18, 2021**

**Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**

**Scripture: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56**

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while. For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As [Jesus] went ashore, he

saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things....

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even **the fringe of his cloak**; and all who touched it were healed.

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Will you pray with me. Healing God, sometimes we have such a hard time touching *you*. Sometimes we find it hard to allow ourselves to *be touched* by you. Remind us this day that you are as near as our next breath and as available to us as we dare to *be open* and *come near* to you. Amen.

"...but when life tumbles in, what then?" I'm not the first one asking that question. It comes from a sermon by Arthur John Gossip and is the title of Gossip's sermon about this question. "...but when life tumbles in, what then?" He wrote this sermon and delivered it shortly after the sudden death of his wife in 1927. "He faced this loss with tremendous courage. He preached to his own people in Aberdeen [in Scotland] and -- through the printed word -- to a much greater congregation. He wrote, 'You people in the sunshine *may* believe in faith, but we in the shadow *must* believe it. We have nothing else.'"<sup>[1]</sup>

Who among us has not experienced the tragic or unexpected or difficult death of a loved one?

Or walked the path of life of debilitating illness or accident with a loved one?

Who among us has not been in need of healing.... of a spiritual, emotional, mental or physical nature? Not one, is my guess, not one....

While *forgiveness* is a major "hot topic" in pastoral ministry, the need for, the seeking after of, healing is another crucial aspect of life that none of us can avoid. It is the topic that brings people *to* faith and church.... and unfortunately, it is the topic that sometimes drives people *away* from faith and church!

I've heard these words more often than I would like:

"If there really was a God, WHY DID MY LOVED ONE HAVE TO DIE?!"

"If there really was a God, why didn't he hear MY prayers?!"

"YOU can pray if you like, but nobody's listening!"

"I thought church was a place for *comfort*. All the preacher wants to do is tell me how much I've *sinned!*" You all know that's not the message you receive from THIS pulpit!

But on the other hand, and Gossip suggests this through his preaching, I've heard these words, "I don't know what I would have done, or do, without my faith in God, without my church family, without my trusting that all will be well, no matter how awful things are right now."

Here's the closing paragraph of Gossip's sermon about all this.

"I don't think you need be afraid of life. Our hearts are very frail; and there are places where the road is very steep, and very lonely. But we have a wonderful God. And as Paul puts it, what can separate us from His love? Not death, he says immediately, pushing that aside at once as the most obvious of all impossibilities. No, not death. For, standing in the roaring of the Jordan, cold to the heart with its dreadful chill, and very conscious of the terror of its rushing, I too, like Hopeful, can call back to you who one day in your turn will have to cross it, *'Be of good cheer, my brother, for I feel the bottom, and it is sound.'*"<sup>[2]</sup>

"I feel the bottom, and it is sound." I don't know about you, but I hold onto those words for dear life. ***"I feel the bottom, and it is sound."***

Healing comes in many, many forms, doesn't it? Take our passage from the Gospel of Mark for this morning. Jesus and his colleagues are just trying to take a little break from the roaring, needy crowds who are continually clamoring after them. Wouldn't it be nice to have a little time to just have a leisurely meal together, maybe have a little wine, maybe take a snooze.... away from the needy people who seemed to know where Jesus was, no matter where he was.... Yes, it would be nice to have a little time "away," wouldn't it?

But Jesus comes across as the pastor extraordinaire.... always willing to show compassion to those in need.... always available. I've told some of you the description about Protestant ministers being just a "quivering mass of availability"! I imagine Jackie and Jonna are familiar with that sentiment! What I've learned over the past twenty years, though, is trying to be part of that "quivering mass" continually has left me at times with headaches, overwhelming exhaustion and a less than likable or compassionate temper! Jesus IS my role model, don't get me wrong, but I can't be Jesus 24/7!

So in the text for today, needy people are coming and coming and coming to Jesus to be healed. And the last verse reads, "And wherever he [Jesus] went, into

villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even **the fringe of his cloak**; and all who touched it were healed." (Mk 6:56)

A little biblical/historical background about this verse: When you read back in Mark you find "a progressive revelation of Jesus' power [through touch]. From Mark 3:7-12, where people *touched* Jesus to be healed, through to 5:21-34, where the woman *touches his clothes* to be healed, to the text for today, where **the fringe of his cloak** has healing power. These four tassles were the prescribed attire for all male Jews (recorded in Numbers 15:39); that Jesus wore them present him as an observant Jew and forms the transition to the controversy in the next section"<sup>[3]</sup> of Mark, but that's a topic for another day.

The Gospel of Mark, as with the other three Gospels, is written "not as historical reporting but [for] theological meaning."<sup>[4]</sup> This is a concept that some Christian interpreters of the Bible seem to miss. The *historical context* of the passages IS very important.... the *theological messages* being passed along, however, do not rely on specific historical details of a biblical story in order to be true and life giving.

As an example, in our country anyway, we don't think of women as property -- as is commonly written of in the Bible as being acceptable, and some of us do eat shellfish -- which is prohibited according to the Old Testament, and most women are willing to wear red dresses on Friday! That's somewhere in there, too. And we don't think slavery is a good idea now, but it was common in the stories from the Bible.

More important and more relevant for our day in reading the Bible is the question, "*What is the theological meaning of this text or this story? What does it teach us about the nature of God and of the sacredness of all life?*" not, "This is the way it absolutely happened 2,000 years ago and if you don't believe it then you're not a Christian!" But, I digress....

It seems to me, in *my* interpretation of our text for today, that touch is one of the most powerful instruments of healing. That's *healing*, not necessarily *curing*. That's *restored life*, not *manufactured happiness*. And touch comes in many forms. Healing comes in many forms.

So here's a few questions for today: The fringe of *whose cloak* is healing for you? Why? What does that cloak and fringe *look like* and *feel like*? For whom do *you* offer your cloak and fringe? For me, the most helpful and healing cloak

and fringe come from my “Ma.” All I have to do is think of my mother’s smile and hear her call, “*Susie!*” and I am calmed.....

And remember these words of preacher Arthur John Gossip as you ponder these questions, "*I feel the bottom, and it is sound.*"

Let the people say, "Amen."

**Federated Church in Thomaston**  
**United Church of Christ    United Methodist Church**  
**All Are Welcome**  
**Sunday, July 18, 2021**

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor    Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director  
Lector: Kathleen Anderson

*Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.*

*An asterisk (\*) indicates where you are invited to stand.*

***Bold print** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

**GATHERING FOR WORSHIP**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude** Teach me Thy Way, Oh Lord -- Roger C. Wilson

**Call to Worship**

Leader: People of God, come close. You who have been far away, draw near.

**People:** Jesus has broken down the barriers that separate us from God and cancelled all conflict that separated us from each other.

**All:** Let us come close, together we will build a house based on healing, and love. Let us worship God!

**\*Opening Hymn** “Gather Us In” (see insert)

**An Invocation....**

**A Responsive Reading** “The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm & Romans 8:38-39 in conversation....” (see insert)

**A Moment of Silence**

**SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**Scripture Reading** Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Message** *“the fringe of his cloak”*    **Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**

**\*Hymn of Meditation** “Come and Find the Quiet Center” (see insert)

**RESPONDING IN FAITH**

**Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other**

**Pastoral Prayer**

**The Lord’s Prayer.....**

**Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**

**Offertory** The King of Love my Shepherd is (tune St. columb, an ancient Irish melody)

**\*Doxology No. 95 Blue**

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**\*Closing Hymn** “The Summons” (see insert)

**Benediction**

**Postlude** Variations on the hymn tune Nicaea (Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty)

~~~~~

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, July 25, 2021**

**Rev. Dick Hanks will be our guest preacher**

**2 Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145:10-18; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21**

**PRAYER LIST**

**Hold** in your prayers all those affected by the corona virus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... **And** all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs and alcohol among their members.... **And** all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..... **And** add a prayer for Tammy Whirty, a friend of Margie’s, dealing with cancer challenges, and, from Blair, prayers for her friend Judith on the passing of her daughter, Lani, 42, from brain cancer, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier, **and** continued deep prayers for Hank and Lucy as Hank endures his cancer journey with the help of Hospice, **and** continued prayers for Ursula recovering...and for “Cody,” who doesn’t live locally but needs prayers for guidance; Kristin Parker O’Neal, Jo Ann Parker’s daughter, who will be having brain surgery; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Fred Bagnall, Harriet Williams, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, Sally Harjula

Elliot, Helmut Steger, John Flaherty, Doug and BJ Thomson, Heather Van Buskirk, and Michael and Gail in southern Maine

*Please feel free to contact Susan by phone (207)322-1948 or by email [freerangepastor@gmail.com](mailto:freerangepastor@gmail.com) to add or drop the names from the prayer list AND to let her know if you would like for her to stop by for a visit sometime. She's always glad to have a chat with you!*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Tuesday-7/20/21.....5:00-7:00 pm: Weight Watchers

Sunday-7/25/21.....9:30 am: Worship Service

Suggested Food Pantry Donation.....Jello

The flowers this week are given by Galo III, Frances, Alex and Galo IV in loving memory of Galo III's brother, Christopher Hernandez.

Reminders for next Sunday,  
7/25/21

Greeter/Usher: Janet Dwelley

Coffee Host:

Lector: Mimi Zwick

Flowers: Kathleen Anderson

Collection Total for Sunday, July 11, 2021:

|           |                              |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| Pledges - | \$444.00                     |
| Loose -   | \$ 290.00                    |
| Rental -  | \$ 25.00 (Finnish gathering) |
| Total -   | \$759.00                     |

The 2021 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.

**Federated Church of Thomaston  
United Church of Christ  
&  
United Methodist Church  
Together Since 1929**

## *Sunday, July 18, 2021*

**8 Hyler Street, Thomaston, Maine 04861 (207) 354-6105**

FCT email is [thomfedchurch@gmail.com](mailto:thomfedchurch@gmail.com)

WiFi password is #1Church

---

<sup>[1]</sup>John Bishop in "Arthur John Gossip: A passion for preaching," posted at Preaching.com. The sermon and quote itself from Gossip is printed in his book of sermons, *The Hero In Thy Soul: Being An Attempt To Face Life Gallantly*, reprinted by Kessinger Publishing's Rare Reprints ([www.kessinger.net](http://www.kessinger.net)) from an original edition completed in 1929, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, , p. 111.

<sup>[2]</sup>as printed in the reprint of Gossip's book of sermons, *The Hero IO n Thy Soul: Being An Attempt To Face Life Gallantly*, p. 116.

<sup>[3]</sup>M. Eugene Boring & Fred B. Craddock, *The People's New Testament Commentary*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009, p. 136.

<sup>[4]</sup>Ibid., p. 134.