

Worship Service for February 7th: 5th Sunday after the Epiphany PWS&D
Sunday

- **Old Testament:** Isaiah 40:21-31
- **New Testament:** Mark 1:29-39
- **Psalms:** Psalm 147:1-11

Announcements:

- Welcome to our worship service! We're glad you are reading. We pray that God's blessings and peace will be with you all now and forever! Amen.
- Bible study will resume on February 17th. Time: 7pm; Place: St. David's. We will be studying James 1.

Sermon: Hold Steady On God!

In our world today, sickness is ravaging so many people and worse of all, we are going through a pandemic that has lasted a whole year. How exhausting! Covid-19 has caused other terminal diseases to be sidetracked. All we hear in the news these days is about how many people were infected each day, how many have died so far and so on. Yet other people are still dealing with their own health issues and are still being diagnosed of other diseases. Cancer still remains a major health hazard, and people struggle with depression, anxiety and the suicide rate has relatively increased this past year especially with our young people.

However, we are told that in the beginning it was not so. When God created the world, He didn't intend for it to be a place of suffering and despair. He wanted it to be a place of peace and tranquility, of joy and happiness, of goodness and love. In fact, we are told in Genesis 1:31 that after creating the world He acknowledged that it was good.

What happened that things changed so drastically? Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought sin into the world. And of course, sin came with its consequences of hurt and pain, sickness and diseases, sufferings and death.

In spite of all these, there are so many instances in the Bible where God intervened in the health of His people. There was the time in the wilderness when the people had sinned against God and were bitten by poisonous snakes and God asked Moses to make a replica of the snake and set it on a pole and that anyone who looked at it will be healed (Numbers 21:8). King Hezekiah was another person who received healing from God after he had been informed by the prophet Isaiah that he was

going to die. Hezekiah cried out to God and God healed him and added fifteen more years to his life (Isaiah 38:1-8). We also have Naaman the Syrian captain who was suffering from leprosy and received healing when he was directed by God's prophet Elisha to go and wash in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5).

There are indeed lots of instances of healing in the Old Testament and even more of them in the New Testament. Beginning with God sending His son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins, we hear of how he healed people of their diseases. An example is the one we read today in our passage where Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, and we are told that people brought to Jesus their sick and demon possessed, and they received healing and deliverance. News must have spread from those who witnessed how Jesus delivered the man possessed with demons in the synagogue, therefore, they brought in their sick to be healed by Jesus.

Our God is the same yesterday, today and forever and He still heals the sick. There've been times in my life when I have personally struggled to believe or to trust God on healing because a few times I have seen people die of sickness and diseases even when they were prayed for. I am sure that some of us have had that kind of struggle and we are now very careful about praying for healing or we don't do so at all because we don't believe God still heals.

Healing might mean different things for different people. Some people need healing from a broken heart, from anxiety and depression, from grief and loneliness. For others healing means courage to go through a treatment process or a surgery that would otherwise cause us fear; for others we might need healing because we feel that we are not understood by others or we feel rejected in the society. For another person their healing will be feeling better about themselves and not thinking that they have failed in life or that they failed their parents, spouses or children or the society.

Our passage in Isaiah 40 declares that God is great in strength and mighty in power; He is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He is a God who does not faint or grow weary and His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

Are you faint? Are you weary? Are you exhausted from your struggles and feel weighed down? God is telling you today that He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. All you need to do is to wait on the Lord, to trust and

have faith in Him. And He will renew your strength, cause you to mount up with wings like eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.

On Friday we were doing our morning devotion with the Our Daily Bread devotional and they told this short story of a lady called Harriet Tubman. Harriet was considered to be one of the great American heroes of the nineteenth century. Through her courage she was able to lead herself and three hundred other fellow slaves to freedom. Harriet who was described as a woman of deep faith prayed to God before embarking on this dangerous journey. And she said, ***“I always told God, I’m going to hold steady on you, and you’ve got to see me through.”*** In her journey, after freeing herself, she ventured back nineteen more times to lead friends, family and strangers to freedom. In all this, Harriet held steady on God, trusting Him for guidance and protection. Harriet’s freedom was her healing.

What are you going through today that is causing fear in your heart? The kind of fear that you might not even have the courage to express to your spouse, or your children or the people close to you? What is that issue that is causing you to have sleepless nights? God wants us to have faith and trust in Him completely. In James 1, we are advised not to waiver in our faith in God.

I am sure that everyone of us present here today are going through one thing or the other or know someone going through a challenge. Some of us might even be at the verge of losing hope and surrendering because we feel that there might never be a solution to our challenge.

God has a message for you today. He is calling on you to hold steady on Him and allow Him to do the rest. He is inviting you to trust Him to help you make the right decision. And in the words of Isaiah 41:10-13, God is telling you today: my son! My daughter! Listen to me this morning.

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. “All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.”

I pray for anyone struggling with one thing or the other today. May the Sun of Righteousness rise in your situation with healing in His wings and cause you to leap with joy like a calf who has been let out of his stall (Malachi 4:2). In Jesus mighty name, Amen.

Prayer

God, we wait, we watch, we long for you. Renew our powers, refresh our spirits, restore our wellbeing; for you give new strength to the faint and power to the powerless. May your church be found working among those who lack resources or rights. May we seek to care for those who cannot care for themselves. We pray for the lowly and the humiliated. We pray for relief organizations, especially the PWS &D. God, be to them a tower of strength.

We pray for the great powers of the world, the strong nations, and mighty governments. May their power be used properly that the poor are protected, the weak are not exploited, and no one is oppressed. We pray too for multinational corporations who often wield more power than many governments, that in their relentless pursuit of profit they may take those steps of compassion and concern which will benefit them as well as those powerless to stop them.

We speak to you of our concern for places where there is conflict, violence, and misery: war ravaged countries, domestic cruelty, bullying in school grounds, workplace intimidation, gang warfare on streets, or terrorist attacks. We speak to you of our concern for all displaced people: the homeless, those in refugee camps, fugitives from oppression, and for all separated families and traumatised children.

We speak to you of our concern for neighbours, workmates, or members of our own families who are 'doing it tough;' the unemployed and the disabled, some fighting terminal illness, others in despair from broken relationships, some grieving a death, many caught up in predicaments for which there seems no obvious answer. We pray for all who are in weakness of body, mind or spirit, all who have come to the end of their tether. We think of all who are losing their mobility or agility, those who are losing their memories, and all who have lost their grip on reality; of those who no longer trust in anyone, and those who doubt the love of God; we think of all who are caring for loved ones in illness.

We speak to you of our concern for the church: with its flourishing or weak congregations, some living in comfort and others surviving under persecution, some filled with self-doubts and some with over self-confidence, churches without priests and ministers or those where sadly there is conflict between clergy and laity.

We pray now for ourselves. Help us, in our own small way, to be more like your compassionate Christ. Shape our thoughts, sift our feelings, supervise our efforts, bless our abilities, that we may get the best out of each day and give the best to those around us. Through the grace of Christ Jesus our Redeemer.

Generous and loving God, we bring our offering to you, trusting that you will bless our gifts and use them in ways we cannot even imagine. Jesus touched so many lives in so many different ways. We ask that these gifts will touch many lives, too, with your healing and hope in these difficult days.

We give thanks for all who have cared for us in times of weakness; for those who have uplifted our spirits and given us new hope. We pray for our friends and families, especially any who are finding life difficult at the moment. We pray for any in our community that may feel neglected or rejected.

We give thanks that Christ is our healer and our companion on the Way; he will not allow us to be lost. We pray for loved ones departed who are renewed and refreshed in the love and light of God. May the Light of the world truly be that lamp set out on the lampstand to them.

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, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Go now, and trust in God's mercy for your strength. Proclaim the good news wherever God calls you, and do not set yourselves apart from others, but be all things to all people for the sake of the gospel. And may God give you the strength and freedom of an eagle. May Christ be the healing that nourishes and renews your soul. And may the Holy Spirit be the rising wind beneath your wings. Amen.