October 16, 2022

Rick Myatt

A CURE FOR THE DISEASE

2 Kings 5:1-16

Our granddaughter, Ella, had decided that the white paint on the outside of their house was boring. She decided to liven it up. I don’t know how she managed to get into some paint, but she did some very colorful painting on some walls on the back of the house. Her parents were not excited about the improvement project. I’m not sure how they’re going to resolve that problem.

I read a story recently about another child who also “helped” his parents. He is a two year old named Leo. He had helped his mom as she was using a shredder to dispose of some documents in their home office. A little later he set about helping while mom was doing some other tasks. Unfortunately, he inserted into the shredder an envelope containing more than $1000 in cash they were saving to pay off a debt. They were frustrated, but realized he didn’t know what he was doing. He was just trying to help, so they figured all they could do was laugh about it. The money was gone, literally shredded to bits. It turns out that it wasn’t all they could do about it. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing has a “Mutilated Currency Division” that deals with ruined bills as a free service. They handle 30,000 claims a year, redeeming $30 million. Leo’s dad, Ben, contacted them and they told him to put the remains of the money in Ziploc baggies and send it in, and they would see what they could do. Perhaps a hopeless situation is not hopeless after all.

Today we’re going to look at a man who had a problem that seemed hopeless, but it turned out, to his surprise, there was hope, though it would be found in an unlikely way. We’re going to see that we have much in common with him, for we also have a problem that seems impossible to resolve. It turns out there is hope. Let’s look at 2 Kings 5:1-16.

THE GENERAL HAD A PROBLEM

General Mark A. Milley is currently the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, our nation’s highest ranking military officer and the principal military advisor to the President and the National Security Council. The story we are looking at today focuses on a man who held a similar position in his nation. Verse 1 says, “Naaman was the commander of the army of the king of Aram.” Naaman was the top General in Aram.

Aram was a people group, the Arameans, who lived to the northeast of Israel, mostly in what is known as Syria today. It was kind of a confederation of states that never coalesced into one strong nation that was able to become dominant in world affairs. They had a kind of on and off relation with Israel. At times they were allies against a larger threat like Assyria, and at times they fought against each other.

Naaman’s name meant “pleasantness.” It seems to have been an apt name for him, because he was highly regarded by all. He was a courageous soldier, and he was a brilliant military strategist and a respected leader who had won battles for his people. The General was an unlikely central character for a story in the Hebrew scriptures. He was a Gentile. He was a military hero from a nation that was at times an enemy of Israel. He was an unlikely person to be an example of God’s great work in the lives of people. Yet that’s just what he proved to be.

The General was a popular and powerful man. But there are some things that no amount of popularity or human power can overcome. The General faced one of those things. He had leprosy. Leprosy was an elastic term in ancient times. It included the horror of Hansen’s Disease, which is the classic form of leprosy we generally think of today. That terrible disease caused terror in people and resulted in its victims being banished from society. However, the term was also used more broadly of diseases of the skin that were not as destructive and virulent as Hansen’s Disease.

It seems likely that the General had something less horrific than the classic form. He was evidently not banned from contact with other people, which would certainly have happened from that worst form of the disease. However, though it may not have been that severe, this disease was a big problem for the General. It’s not hard to understand why. Entering my freshman year in high school I got a skin condition known as ptyriasis rosea. It causes a rash of red spots over the upper body that typically lasts a couple of months, then goes away on its own. It’s not contagious, and it does no harm. They don’t really know what causes it, though the thought is it is caused by a virus. Virus, of course, is Latin for “your guess is as good as mine.” Consider my situation as a 14 year old boy. I was just entering high school and was going to have to go to PE and take showers in the locker room with this rash on my body. Young teenage boys are noted for their sensitivity and compassion, so this would have been no problem, right? Totally wrong. That could have been the end of my existence. The treatment of me by my colleagues would have been merciless. Our doctor ordered that I be excused from PE for the duration. The condition eventually resolved itself, and I survived unscathed.

But my little experience makes me sympathetic to Naaman’s plight. We don’t know how severe his condition was or whether it actually threatened his well being. But we know at the very least it likely became a central issue in his life. It would have been impossible for other people to ignore his condition, and at the very least it would have made him terribly self-conscious. That would have been at the best end of the spectrum. The worst end of the spectrum likely was that whatever this condition it would have been a threat to his life. There was no cure for his condition.

THE GENERAL SOUGHT HELP FROM AN UNLIKELY SOURCE

At times there were border skirmishes between Aram and Israel, and it wasn’t uncommon when relations were unfriendly for the armies on each side to conduct raids against the other side. These were not major campaigns, just ongoing harassment. We still see this going on between Israel and some of its enemies today. One of the raids by the Arameans had taken some captives. Among them was a young Israeli girl. She became a servant in the General’s household, tending to the General’s wife. We get a sense of what an admirable man the General was from the fact that this young captive Israeli girl was saddened and distressed by the General’s condition. You could expect her to be bitter about what had been done to her. Instead, she seems to have had great fondness for the General and his family. She wanted to help him.

The young Israeli knew of the many astounding things that had been done by Elisha, the prophet back home. She had total confidence in him. She told the General if he would go to Elisha, “He would cure him of his leprosy.” I’m amazed by her faith. How did she know that God would want to heal the General? We don’t know, but there was no doubt in her mind.

What do you do when you have tried everything to find a cure for a medical condition and nothing has helped? People tend to get desperate in that situation. They will try anything and grasp at any straw. The General was desperate. He had no reason to believe that some supposed prophet in a foreign nation could heal him. But he had no other options. If there was one chance in a million that this would work, that was better than no chance at all, which was what he had at that point. Maybe it wasn’t much better in his mind, but it was something. He might have thought he was grasping at straws, but that was all he had.

The General asked his king for permission to go to Israel and seek out this prophet in hopes of finding a cure. The king was all for it. He even wrote a letter to the king of Israel on behalf of the General. The General also brought a significant treasure to give to the king of Israel in hopes of convincing him to help the General. The gift consisted of large amounts of gold and silver that by my calculations would be worth more than $4 million today.

Joram, the king of Israel, was shaken by all of this. According to verse 6 the letter the king of Aram sent him said, “With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.” This was a problem for Joram. He could no more cure Naaman than he could sprout wings and fly. Verse 7 says he ripped his robe and said, “Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life?” He concluded that the other king was trying to find an excuse to pick a fight.

We’ve seen this year how Vladimir Putin depicted the leaders of Ukraine as Nazis and the people of Ukraine as suffering under that Nazi regime. He used this as an excuse to invade Ukraine in order to liberate its people from Nazi oppression. That is what is known as a false flag operation. Tyrants throughout history including Adolf Hitler have used phony and often staged provocations like that as a pretext for invading another country. Joram feared the Aramean king was setting up a false flag operation as a prelude to invading Israel. Fortunately Elisha got wind of what was going on. He sent word to the king telling him to calm down and send Naaman to him. He would take care of the problem.

THE GENERAL HAD TO HUMBLE HIMSELF IN FAITH

Naaman was sent to the home of Elisha, the prophet. He did not receive the welcome there that he expected. Verse 10 says, “Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, ‘Go, wash yourself 7 times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.’” Naaman was offended and angry. He was a well known, highly respected and powerful man. He was used to being recognized and treated with the deference due a man in his position. It seemed Elisha couldn’t even be bothered to come out of his house to greet the man. Apparently he was too busy doing prophet things to be bothered. Common courtesy would have been for him to at least greet him, but he just sent an aide out to tell the general to go bathe in the Jordan River.

Furthermore, Elisha’s instructions to him were insulting. Go bathe in the river? Did he think that the general had a personal hygiene problem, that he didn’t bathe enough and that was what caused the disease? That was downright offensive. But it was either that or Elisha’s instructions implied that the Jordan River had some special, magical power that could heal the general’s disease. But the general didn’t believe that for a minute. Verse 12 says the general stomped off in a rage.

That’s not hard to understand. He has traveled to Israel on the faint, very questionable hope that some prophet could heal him, all based on the word of a captive servant girl. He came with his entourage and with a gift worth millions of dollars. Then this supposed prophet can’t even be bothered to come out of his house to greet him. And the best he can come up with in the way of a cure is “go take a bath in the Jordan River.” The whole thing was a bad joke, but a very expensive one. I suspect that in addition to everything else he was feeling humiliated, first by Elisha’s affront, then by the fact that he had been taken in by what he likely figured was a scam intended to prey on his desperation. I wouldn’t be surprised if he was thinking at that point that an invasion of Israel would be the least that they deserved after this stunt.

Fortunately cooler heads prevailed. The general’s servants really cared about him. They weren’t quite as angry, so they were able to think the situation through a little more logically. They said, “Sir, think of it this way. Suppose this prophet had told you to do some bizarre thing. What if he had asked you to drink some repulsive potion made of castor oil, cough syrup, smashed cilantro, cayenne pepper and garlic. You would have done it, wouldn’t you? Or suppose he told you to kill a bear, then paint the bear’s blood on your skin with an eagle feather while reciting an incantation. You would have done that, right? So why not do something as simple as take a few baths in the river?”

At that point the general admitted that yes, he would have been willing to do bizarre things like that in hopes that somehow it would cure him. The general realized they were right. If the prophet had told him to hop on one foot while patting himself on the tummy, swinging an olive branch around over his head and screaming like a chicken, he would have done it. He was expecting something unusual from the prophet. So he had to confess, they were right. He went to the Jordan and dipped in the river 7 times as instructed. Verse 14 says, “His flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.”

As I studied this, I thought maybe I should apply this directly to myself. I look at little Wesley, and his skin is smooth and flawless. I was at the dermatologist and it took him several minutes to go over my skin dealing with problems and telling me what all the various weird spots and things on my skin are. I’ve got possible skin cancer, pre-cancerous spots, various dark spots and odd bumps and crusty places. I know getting a tan is a bad idea, but I couldn’t do it even if I tried. My skin now when exposed to the sun just gets splotchy looking. I would love to go bathe in the Jordan River and have my skin become clean like that of a young boy. I’d do it 70 times, or 700 times if it would help. Unfortunately, I don’t have a prophet of God telling me that if I do that it will cure my skin issues.

Naaman was blown away. He went back to see Elisha and said to him, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel.” He tried to give Elisha money to thank him for what he had done. But Elisha said “No, thanks.” He wanted Naaman to know he didn’t do what he did for money, he only served God, and God can’t be bought.

IMPLICATIONS

Here again we are faced with the question of what this means for us, if anything. I’d like it to mean that God will always heal any physical disease we have. But I know that’s not true. Paul had a physical ailment of some kind and he prayed that God would take it away, and God’s response was, “My grace is sufficient for you.” We all know great people who love Jesus, who deal with terrible diseases or have even died from them.

Believing that God will always heal physical diseases results in people being disillusioned when it doesn’t happen. It also can create some bizarre practices. When our daughter was in college one summer she sang in a Christian band that toured Honduras. They played in some unusual situations. One Sunday they played in a Pentecostal church that had a woman pastor who was supposedly a faith healer. At one point she was “slaying” people in the Spirit. She would tap them on the forehead and they would fall down, obviously overcome by the Holy Spirit. The band was on the platform and this woman tried to slay Carissa in the Spirit. She tapped Carissa on the head, and Carissa just stood there looking at her. Then the woman tried again, harder. It ended up an awkward moment. Carissa didn’t know she was supposed to fall down, pretending to be overcome. That was the problem, all the healing and slaying was pretending. If God always heals and he doesn’t heal us, then there’s something wrong either with us or with God’s promise, so we have to pretend to keep up appearances. What a pitiful way to live.

So that is not this story’s significance. What does it teach us then?

WE ALL NEED HEALING

Naaman is one human being who stands as an example for all of us. The issue is not simply a physical illness. It is that there is something wrong with all of us, and we know it. All of us need healing of what is wrong on the inside. In his book, *Searching For God Knows What*, Donald Miller wrote, “I have to say that you and I were not supposed to be this way…As creatures incomplete outside the companionship of God, our souls are born distorted…I believe, without question, that ***none of us are happy in the way we were supposed to be happy***.”

The late Frederick Buechner wrote in his book, *Secrets In The Dark*, “Something of great importance in our lives is missing…Something is missing from our lives that we cannot even name, something we know best from the empty place inside us all.” One pastor I read spoke of how for many despair is their constant companion. He said, “Responding to the woundedness, brokenness and violence of our society is a growth industry.” He’s right. People are making billions of dollars off of books, seminars, techniques, cures of all kinds aimed at what needs to be healed within us.

I have mentioned that a few weeks ago I paid a visit to the Emergency Department at the hospital. Our emergency physician son has been educating us on the fact that it is an emergency department, not an emergency room, since it is way more than one room. Just as I finished checking in to the ED, one of the people checking me in said, “What is that guy doing? Oh no, he’s taking his clothes off!” In the waiting room there was a large man who was indeed, divesting himself of his clothing. A couple of the staff members managed to stop him before he got too far with his project. A few minutes later while I was in the waiting room the guy tried again. I was close enough to observe as the staff again intervened. In short order they moved him into a private room. I’ve told a few people that story and they said, “I’ll have to remember that next time I go to the ER. Seems like a way to get moved into a private room quickly.” Perhaps true. But not my point. I was close enough to overhear the interchange between that man and the staff, and it was apparent from things he was saying that he was more than one taco short of a combination plate. He didn’t even have a nodding acquaintance with reality. I felt bad for the guy. How awful to be in his state. He clearly is in need of help, and it’s entirely possible that nothing is going to help him. But as I was thinking about how pitiful this man is, I realized that in some ways, I and everyone else in that room were somewhat like him. There is something wrong with all of us. We are all in need of help. That thing that is wrong with us at times causes us to do things that are bizarre, things that, to beings who are truly completely whole, would look totally crazy. To those sane beings we are pitiful. We need healing.

Life inflicts damage on us. The biggest source of that damage is other people. They hurt us by failing to love us, or by rejecting us, being thoughtless, even mean and unkind, or sometimes simply through indifference to us. It hurts us when they essentially tell us that we don’t even matter or they could care less about us. Sometimes we can never forget the harsh things they do to us, even if we want to. Those failures inflict a wound on us that never really heals.

Actress Viola Davis, twice nominated for an Oscar, widely considered to be one of the best actresses of her generation, is still haunted by childhood experiences. In third grade a group of boys would often taunt her, yell insults at her and even throw stones at her when she went home from school. One day that caught her. They did more than hurl insults at her. They punched her, threw her on the ground, beat her and kicked snow on her. She says that despite her great success, inside she is still that terrified little girl, tormented because of the color of her skin, still running. Our experiences might be different, but the effects of all the injuries are there in all of us.

Ten years ago *The New York Times*, had a story about a work by performance artist Marina Abramovic at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. In her “performance” Abramovic, dressed in a bright red gown, sat in a plan wooden chair on a stage. Visitors to the exhibit would come one by one onto the stage and sit in a wood chair across from her. She would say nothing. She just stared into their eyes. What was surprising was what this produced. Often, after just a few minutes of silent staring, people would break into tears. Abramovic said that as people became quiet she could sense the deep, lonely pain they carried inside. She said, “they were carrying so much pain inside that I could immediately see it and feel it.” She told of one huge Hell’s Angels biker with tattoos all over his body. She said he started fiercely at her at first, but after a few minutes he collapsed into tears and began weeping like a baby. Hurt, disappointment, frustration and fear pile up in our souls. We try to ignore it, bury it, medicate it, but none of that deals with it. What we need is healing from all of it. We all know it.

But there is an even greater and deeper issue that needs healing. That is our brokenness before God. We go around disconnected from him and it is like some terrible disease destroying us from the inside. We need healing from that awful brokenness, from our hopeless spiritual condition. This reality leads us to a profound, unexpected truth we see illustrated in the story of Naaman.

THE HEALING WE NEED COMES FROM GOD

Healing is a beautiful and almost miraculous thing, isn’t it? I had surgery on my arm to repair a torn tendon 6 years ago. I have a 3 inch long scar on my arm that is left over from that surgery. But the amazing thing is, it doesn’t hurt at all. It’s not even a little sensitive. All I have is this faint, thin white line that reminds me of that surgery. Wouldn’t it be great if our souls could be healed like that? Wouldn’t it be awesome if they could be restored to full health in which they are fine in every way, not sensitive or painful at all, that the most that we have is maybe a faint scar that reminds us that hurt once happened?

The Scriptures claim that God can and does heal people. Psalm 103:3 says God, “Forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.” Some people might seize on the last part of that verse and say it is a promise that God will heal any sickness you have. God wants you to be physically healthy, never sick. This sets up many for a crisis of faith when they get sick and God doesn’t heal them. We need to remember that the Psalms are poems. They are intended to touch us, using imagery and feeling to touch our hearts and are not always literal in every concrete way. We must remember that Hebrew poetry typically involved parallelism. It would state something, then say the same thing in a different way. You see that in Psalm 103:3. Forgiving sins and healing our diseases are essentially about the same thing. David wasn’t talking about physical disease. He was talking about disease of the soul. God will heal our souls.

Psalm 6 is about sadness of the heart. In verse 3 David said, “My soul is in deep anguish.” Verse 1 of the Psalm tells us David was concerned about God rebuking him or disciplining him. In verse 2 he said, “Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint; heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.” Again it is not his physical body that was at issue. It was his soul that was in anguish. In these Psalms David needed healing of his soul, and he turned to God, because God is the source of healing. Psalm 147:3 says the Lord, “heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. In the famous Psalm 23 in verse 3 David said that the Lord, the great Shepherd, “refreshes my soul.” I like some of the more familiar translations of that, which say he “restores my soul.”

The question every human being asks, whether consciously or not, is, where can I find that healing? Our culture is a therapeutic culture. It says therapy can give us relief from the pain. Really, the only other option our culture offers people is to try to medicate the pain, make it go away. This brings us to a big divide. The question is whether the answer for our need for healing is theological or therapeutic. Those two ideas are not mutually exclusive. Therapy and counseling can be very helpful, even powerful. But we must think about what the root of our problem is. Is the fundamental problem that we have been hurt, that we need to not hurt anymore, or is the real issue that we are separated from God and not experiencing his forgiveness, love, peace and hope?

People once understood the human problem to have a spiritual root, but that has changed in the last 150 years. Now the problem is seen as a therapeutic one. Therapy and counseling can be very helpful. They can give us insight, understanding, tools for coping and resolving issues. But they can’t do everything. They can’t take pain away, for instance.

Greg Bellow is the son of Saul Bellow, the author who won both a Pulitzer Prize and a Nobel Prize for his books. Greg was deeply hurt by his father when he was young. He wrote a memoir of his life and of his father. In it he said of the hurt from his father when he was young, “I felt like a deep sea diver cut off from my air supply.” In a review of the book in *The New Yorker* James Wood said the book is a cry of pain. He wrote, “At 69 years old Greg Bellow is still the drowning deep sea diver.” Greg is a psychotherapist. Somehow it hasn’t healed his pain. In fact, the article reported that Greg’s wife edited the first draft of the book and insisted on frequent deletions with the repeated notation, “Gratuitous hostility.”

One well known Harvard psychiatrist told of a man he had treated for 15 years. He expressed frustration because his successful patient has gained much insight and has much better understanding of himself and the sources of his pain now, but he is just as angry and unhappy as the first day he met him.

I have been dealing with headaches for several months. I went to the ER and got a CT scan which showed there was nothing structurally wrong. The doctor who treated me diagnosed the problem as idiopathic trigeminal neuralgia. I asked, “Oh, no, how long have I got to live, doc?” That’s an ominous sounding disease. But let me translate that for you. The word “idiopathic” doesn’t mean I’m an idiot. It’s from the Greek word *idios*, which means, “one’s own.” Trigeminal refers to the trigeminal nerve, which is on the side of the face. Neuralgia means pain in a nerve. So altogether it means “pain in the trigeminal nerve that’s unique to you.” He said nerve pain is very hard to treat. The doctor told me that there are some drugs that they can use to treat my idiotic problem, but that they require careful long term management, so I would need to see a neurologist about that. Then he said, “In the short term I can prescribe you some narcotic pain killers if you’d like.” I passed on that. I know that they might dull the pain, but they do nothing about actually healing the problem. Too much of what we do in our culture about our pain is kind of like that. Maybe it can dull the pain for a bit, but it can’t fix it.

Jeremiah cried out to God in Jeremiah 17:14, “Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed.” God can heal us, and when he heals us, we will be truly healed, become whole and healthy. To be healed and whole there are 7 things we all need. I tried to think of a cute acronym to represent them, but failed. All I could come up with is KFRUHPR, which is totally unhelpful. Here are the 7.

1 Know God

We are created for God. We have a need for him as real as our need for air, water and food.

2 Forgiveness

We all know we aren’t what we ought to be. We try all manner of ways to rid ourselves of the guilt of that. But the only thing that can fix it is for someone to forgive us. But it has to be a final authority with the right and the authority to forgive. That’s God. Without that guilt eats away at us like an ulcer.

3 Righteousness

We saw in Romans that we all are desperate for a stamp of approval, for a judgement that we are acceptable and have great worth. But again it has to come from outside ourselves. The meat in a store can’t declare itself approved. It needs the USDA to do it. That’s what righteousness is and we will never be at peace and healed until we get it.

4 Unconditional love

Very one of us needs to be loved and accepted just as we are, just for ourselves. Love is essential to healing.

5 Hope

We must have hope. Yes, hope of eternal life. Without that life is tragic and despairing. But also hope that our lives have meaning, that they are not just random and absurd. Hope that God is in control and at work even in our circumstances.

6 Power to love and forgive

We know being loved is essential to healing and wholeness. But being able to love others is what we were made to do. Loving is a crucial aspect of healing. But that can be hard, because people are difficult. They hurt us. Those hurts can fill us with anger, resentment and bitterness, and that’s like an acid that eats away at us. We need the ability to forgive them and love them even when they are unlovely.

7 Reason to rejoice

To be fully healed and whole we need joy. But joy is a response. We have joy because something good has happened to us. We need some cause of joy that exists no matter what may happen around us or to us.

We need all of these to be truly healed and whole. Our son the doctor has warned us that this is shaping up to be a bad flu season. You know what the flu is like. It typically involves fever, headache, body aches, maybe sore throat, cough, weakness and fatigue. You are not fully healed from the flu until you are over all of them. Our souls are not fully healed until we know God, are truly forgiven, know we have righteousness and worth, have hope, have power to forgive and love others, and have reason for joy. If any of those are missing, we still need healing.

The crucial truth is those only come from God. No person, no process, no technique, no science, nothing in this world can give them to us.

HEALING REQUIRES HUMILITY AND FAITH

How does that healing come about? We go back to the story of Naaman to discover it. Why did Elisha not even deign to come out and greet the general? Why did he tell him to bathe in the Jordan River? Does that river have some mystical healing power? No, in Elisha’s day tons of people bathed or swam in that river and nothing happened except they got wet. So why did Elisha send the general to the river?

First, the thing of not greeting the general as he expected was a way of forcing the general to humble himself. He had to swallow his offended pride and admit that he was in need of help that was more important than his pride. Telling him to bathe in the Jordan River also required that he humble himself. But the big factor there was faith. He had to do something that made no sense. He knew that there was nothing about the water of the Jordan River that could heal his condition. The point of that exercise was faith. Elisha could have picked anything as the key action for being cured. He could have told him to eat nothing but figs from a nearby orchard for a week, or stand on his head and sing Hava Nagila 10 times. It wasn’t the action itself that brought the healing, it was trusting in Elisha and his God that was key, and that meant by faith doing whatever the prophet said.

Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” That was exactly the general’s situation. He had to believe that God exists and would reward him with healing if he would do as instructed. It was the faith that was key.

What does this mean to us? It means we must have faith that what God tells us is true. We must believe that the root of what is wrong with us is spiritual. The heart of the human condition is that we are disconnected from God and have all the damage that stems from that. And that means that the healing of our soul begins with God and our relationship to him.

1 Peter 2:24 says of Jesus, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live to righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” Our healing is rooted in Jesus and what he has done and continues to do for us.

What needs healing in your heart? Is it guilt, anger, discouragement, hopelessness, frustration, bitterness, pain, disappointment? The healing for whatever it is begins with putting your faith in Jesus and what he has done for us. It begins with believing that in his grace, by faith you are completely, 100% forgiven. You are loved beyond your ability to comprehend, and nothing will ever stop God from loving you. It means knowing you have his stamp of approval, despite your own disapproval of yourself. It means knowing that you are of such unimaginable value to God that Jesus Christ came to die for you. It means knowing that you have hope. It means knowing that God is at work in your life today. It means believing what we saw last week, that what God supplies today is enough and rejoicing in what he gives you, being content with that by faith. It means knowing that God has enough grace, love and forgiveness to enable you to love the unlovely people who have hurt you and to forgive them. It means drawing upon God’s presence today, and every day.

Years ago as you all know Laurie and I went through the lovely experience of being told we weren’t wanted. In the process of that some people that had been friends said a number of things that were quite unkind, I felt unfair and inaccurate, and definitely hurtful. It’s hard to get past things like that. They inflicted some wounds. But those wounds have been healed. They weren’t healed by anything other people did. They were healed by putting my faith in God. They were healed by believing that what God supplies is enough, believing that God loves me and approves of me, and that’s what matters, believing that God is in control, even of that situation, so I could trust that if he had not allowed it, it wouldn’t have happened. My heart was healed by trusting God is at work in my life, seeking my good. Faith in Jesus and what he has done for me, was the source of healing.