

## God our healer

Mark 5.21-43

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Hardly anything in our life is so important as our health and the health of family, children, and friends. We have one life only and it is so great to grow old, and to do so in body and with a mind that works fine till the end.

If this is what the Lord our God gives us, we must thank him for this blessing, because 'health' is not normal. Not at all.

And often when disease hits us, we ask, 'Why me! Why him. Why her.' Maybe we focus so much on that question because we have this deep assumption that being fully healthy is the norm and our right.

We spend annually 4000 euro per person in the Netherlands on health care, and we seem to be one of the healthiest countries in the world.

But who cares about statistics when sickness hits you or your family, or your friends.

### 1. Why

Easy answers to this 'why me' question are deeply suspect - except of course if the health-problem is clearly our own doing. If I smoke much, no wonder my lungs get damaged. If I live like a couch potato, no wonder I get a herniated disk.

But very often we cannot answer the 'why me' question. And then it seems that we direct the question at God. 'Why should this strike me, me out of all people! I did not deserve this, did I?'

We cannot deny that our Creator, in one way or another, does have something to do with the good things and with the bad things that happen to us. He is Almighty, and He does not just stand at the sideline of our lives.

But if we say that He wanted all things, even the bad things in our lives, to happen to us, or that he purposely allowed all of our sickness, then we make him into the author of ugliness.

Neither option is consistent with what we know of the character of God.



The Christian faith teaches that we can know God and his character in the face of Jesus Christ. If we want to know God, and if we desire to know how He relates to our suffering, we must therefore look at Jesus.

That steers us away from approaching the issue of God and evil, God and pain, from a theoretical perspective; it takes us to God in his very concreteness, as incarnated in Jesus Christ.

What we have is Jesus and his life on earth – in which He fully reflected the will and the love of God his Father. And in his life, Jesus showed God's great interest in meeting your needs.

We have read of Jairus, the head of the synagogue in Capernaum. The good man had a sick daughter – a child he loved dearly. She was dying actually, and listen to the tender words of Jairus: 'My little daughter is sick. My little child is dying...'



A few hours later, Jairus could feast – the presence of God through Jesus Christ changed the situation – his daughter who had died, was alive again.

This was an event in history, in time and space, not some mythology. When Mark described Jairus, head of the synagogue of Capernaum, his readers had little difficulty to verify the story.

Jairus was a well-known leader in a famous city in Israel. And there were lots of witnesses.

So Mark presented his readers with a verifiable historical event.

Sure, it may be hard to believe that Jesus did raise a girl from the dead. But St Augustine said:

If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself.

Take the miracles out of the Bible, and we take God out of life.

Do you not know, in your own environment, people who were about to die – but God called them back from the grave as you and others prayed for them?

We can probably all testify to those moments when a child was very sick, or a friend, or maybe you, and you prayed your heart out – and the person was healed again...

But if God is indeed love and able to heal people, why then did that other child die?

Or that friend who has been suffering from a dreadful disease for years? Or the young person we prayed so much for in church and he passed away...

The fact that we do not have an answer, and the reality that many prayerful people become sick and die, should not lead us to stop from testifying to what we also see: God does heal people.

## 2. Healing

And think of this. We all get all sorts of diseases, illnesses in our lives, and most of the time, we are healed from those again. The Creator who made our bodies is involved in this in one way or another.

Or do you think it is just nature? Or good luck? God is the Creator and Sustainer of life, and it is our duty and our joy to thank him for all blessings in our life, including our health.

God is the one who knows your body, who knows your mind, and who is able to make your life all right. And sometimes he does that in a rather spectacular manner.

And even if we have not seen unexpected healing events, we must certainly not forget to recognise the hands of God in the hands of the doctors that serve us.

God has created the possibility for radiation therapy, and chemical substances that are given as medicine. He made mankind clever to produce very sharp knives, and minute drills to save us from dreadful toothaches...

We often do not see the provision of God in all this – but we should. There is no contradiction between God's direct intervention in healing people, or medical doctors applying their wisdom and God-created medicine.

God seldom works immediately, he uses human beings as his mediators, to be his hands – and this includes the area of healing in times of sickness. Just as he uses you to help others.

So when doctors are involved, we still pray to God for healing, and we thank him for his gift of health. In the end, the doctors can only do their bit... God has to make the body function again, or make the wound grow together.

The haemorrhaging woman whom we have read about, found out that doctors are not the ones that give health. She had gone to many, one after the other. That poor



woman must have been paying her wallet empty and praying her heart out, ‘God, heal me, use the doctors’, but nothing has worked and she was broke.

Because she suffered from continuous bleeding for twelve years, she must have so often wondered: “Why me, why does God not save me from this disaster.”

In her case, the problem was even more severe because her disease made her religiously unclean. She was not able to go to the temple or to the synagogue; that was forbidden by Jewish law. Not only was she awfully sick, but she also felt very far away from God.

God often does not give us what we ask from him. And sensitive people as we are, it is very easy to then think that something must be wrong with us.

“Why am I sick? Why does God not answer my prayers? Have I done something wrong? Is He punishing me with this?”

But the reality that good Christians, good people, get sick and sometimes die before we think they should, must not surprise us. St Paul speaks of his thorn in the flesh – many Bible commentators think that he had an eye disease.

He was without doubt a great servant of God, but he did not have a healthy and strong life. Three times he had prayed to God that he would be healed, but three times God made clear to him: ‘my grace is enough for you, I will not change your situation. I will not heal you.’

This show us that suffering, pain, disease, are not a sign of rejection by God, or that He is not interested in us. The sufferings of Paul and of Jesus Christ actually show that pain and problems may serve a goal.

Does your suffering, your sickness, serve a goal? Again, often we just do not know what that might be.

### **3. Be with me**

But if in the midst of our pain we do not learn, if we do not come closer to God through our circumstances, then we have certainly missed a chance to let our circumstances be a positive force in our life.

It is good to be reminded of what Jairus actually asked of Jesus:

- Give me a lecture on Gods wisdom and how we can learn something even in difficult times?
- A sermon that says: ‘You must have done something wrong, therefore God punishes you?’
- Is Jairus asking for a medical explanation?

No, Jairus does not need all that. He simply said to Jesus: “Come”. This is what Jairus began with. “Come. Come in my home, and then, lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.”

Jairus started with saying: “Come in my home.” In times of great misery, the presence of God through Jesus Christ is the best we can aim for, and after we have invited him into our situation, he may act by healing, directly, or through medicine, or he may not.

But in all cases, whether we are healthy or not, Jesus Christ is the presence of God to comfort us and to be with us.

There is nothing more comforting in life, and nothing that can create such change, as the presence of God through Jesus Christ.

‘Jesus, come into my life, in my house, in my family, and touch me. Make me whole.’

The woman who had been haemorrhaging for twelve years went to Jesus, and touched him.

This is the clear biblical advice for how to act when in troubles of health or in whatever sort of problem: Let us make God our refuge. Let us invite Jesus Christ to come and be in our house, in our life. Invite him to be in the midst of our problems.

Prayer means on the one hand, asking him to intervene in your need. But it is also, and I believe it is in the first place, inviting God to be close to you. Or rather, it is to ask God to make us aware, afresh, that He was always near to us, even in our bad days.

## **Conclusion**

In the midst of problems, hold on to him and know: ‘Even though I really do not understand, even though I am upset and maybe angry about my situation - God is a loving Father and He is with me in the midst of my misery.’

And even louder than our cry: “Lord come into my misery”, and even preceding our cry for him to come, Jesus calls us to come to Him:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.  
(Mathew 11.28)

God invites us to come with our needs. He does not offer answers. He offers us himself.

**+ Amen**