

Lent Devotion on Healing

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By Pastor Phil Hougen

[Jesus] prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." Matthew 26:39

In the midst of our brokenness we need all kinds of healing. When I fall and break my nose, which I have done recently, I pray for healing. When I fail to fulfill my good intentions to do what I know is right, what I believe to be God's will, I pray for healing. When I hurt someone with thoughtless or careless words and a relationship is broken, I pray for healing. When I see others suffering, I pray for healing.

We are broken people living in a broken world. Our bodies need healing; our relationship with God needs healing; our relationships with others need healing.

Sometimes I wonder if some of my prayers for healing are too selfish. I know what I want for myself and for others. I want the pain to go away. I want to be cured. Is it okay for me to ask God for what I want?

Decades ago, a confirmation student asked me, "Pastor, do you think it's okay for me to pray for a new ten speed bicycle?" I told him that I believed that God knew what he really wanted, so it was fine if he prayed for it. But, he protested, "What if I don't get it?" Tough question for a thirteen year old to ask and for a young pastor to answer.

We don't always get what we ask for, whether it is a bicycle or the healing that we need.

It strikes me that Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was praying for a kind of healing when he prayed that the cup of suffering would pass from him. Apparently, Jesus didn't want to suffer and die on the cross. But Jesus also prayed that God's will, not his own will, would be done. One way to read this is to understand that the will of God will not always conform to our desires, even when we feel we are praying for things that seem so good and right.

We need healing. We want healing. So, I think we should always be praying for healing. I believe that God always wills healing. But I also know that our prayers are not always answered in the way we desire. In the ultimate circumstances of life and death, sometimes people die. We all will die eventually. Is it part of the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus that in the end the ultimate healing is new life in Christ after death? Is that the ultimate healing? If it is, then when our broken bones, or relationships, or dashed hopes are healed in this world, we praise the Lord for healing. But when our prayers seem to go unanswered, perhaps we can remember that the Lord may have a different, better healing in mind for us.