

## **“Jesus, Lord Of Our Bodies”**

*The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – June 30, 2024*

*2 Corinthians 8:7-15, Mark 5:21-43*

A man getting up in age went to see his doctor for a thorough examination. When the doctor was finished, he said, “You’re as fit as a fiddle. You’ll live to be eighty years old.”

The man said, “But I am eighty years old!” The doctor smiled and said, “See, what did I tell you?”

How does a person get fit as a fiddle? Part of it is good genes and the rest may be a good diet and exercise.

Do you remember Jack LaLanne, the fitness Guru? Jack LaLanne presented fitness and exercise advice on television for 34 years. "The Jack LaLanne Show" was the longest running television exercise program. He continued to work out every morning for two hours up to the day before he died at 96. He spends 1½ hours in the weight room and half an hour swimming or walking.

LaLanne said his two simple rules of nutrition are: "if man made it, don't eat it", and "if it tastes good, spit it out." He often says, "I cannot afford to die, it will ruin my image."

I Corinthians 6:19-20 “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? you are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.”

It should be obvious to us that God made us and he gave us the body we live in, consequently, we owe the Lord to take care of our bodies as best we can. Our bodies are the Lord’s property, and we are simply managers of that property. And physical training is of some value because it can help to keep us healthy.

Peter Kreeft of Boston College, who is a great writer and big on prayer, said, “I find praying while you take a walk a good combination of spiritual and physical exercise.”

Physical training is of some value. It can help us to keep fit, which in turn should allow us to serve the Lord better, more often and more efficiently.

But what happens when our bodies break down and betray us. I don't know if you know my history but 10 years ago, I had a heart attack and had to have a stint put in. I won't go into all the details, but long story short, I was very angry and upset that my body let me down. And since then, I have had to have 2 new knees and a new shoulder. For someone who has been active all my life, there are times that I feel I am just falling apart!

Are there things I should be doing? Yes. Could I be eating better? Yes. Could I get more exercise? Yes. But the real question is: "will I?"

And so today we have gathered not only to worship but also to exercise a bit to become truly whole. Wholeness is not just a spiritual aspect, but rather a mind, body, and spirit working together to become what God has created us to be. In doing that, a great miracle happens, like the miracle of healing, that we find in our lesson today.

Think, if you will, of the miracle of healing as it is told in today's gospel lesson. A woman ill for 12 years, having consulted many doctors, her money was now all gone, had heard of Jesus' healing ministry. In desperation, or in faith, we know not which, she determined to touch Jesus clothes, thinking that that act alone, might make her well. Somehow, she managed to get to Jesus, despite the taboos against unclean women being in public, and a strange woman touching a man in public. You of course know the rest of the story. As a result of her boldness, she made contact with the Master's clothing. As Mark put it, "immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could get rid of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses so easily today! Often it seems to take more than just a touch to heal, yet we never want to underestimate the power of the human touch. Think for a moment of the pleasure of human touch: the softness of a new baby's skin next to yours, a formal handshake, the warm embrace of a long-separated member of the family, the intimate kiss of lovers. There really is no substitution for tactile stimulation, the joy of human touch.

When the woman touched Jesus and experienced bodily healing, Jesus stopped abruptly in his tracks and asked, “who touched me?” His disciples wanted to ignore the matter, but the now healed woman, with some degree of fear, came forward and confessed to Jesus her boldness and miraculous healing. Instead of a rebuke for defying social custom, Jesus commended her on her courage, and added a double blessing: “daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease.” Her 12-year battle was over and in addition she had a spiritual security that God loved her, and that knowledge would give her contentment and wholeness all her life!

This lesson from Mark shows yet another example of how Jesus can be the Lord and master, in a variety of human situations where we are willing to come to him in faith and expectation, or just plain desperation! Whatever brings us to Jesus initially is not as important as the fact of our coming. When we give God a chance, to touch our lives, healing miracles do happen!

One of the main reasons why some people don't go to church and become members is that they don't feel that they are good enough, that they have too many problems or that their problems are so large that not even God can help. I always want them to look around and see that we are not a body of perfect angels, but rather an emergency ward to God's Hospital. We come battered and bruised, needing medication, and sometimes just someone to hold our hands and say that we are going to be all right. I sometimes want to have the church symbol to include the same international symbol for the hospital so that we don't forget that we too, are here for our weekly checkup and spiritual boost to help us with our weekly hurts and woes.

Carl Dudley, in his book, “The Smaller Church,” told of the prayer of an old woman, confined to a nursing home, with the added burden of an alcoholic child:

Lord... I want to touch you and know your refreshment and reassurance... thank you for this sacred spot where I've heard your voice and felt your healing touch across the years... Help me to be a help to others, give me strength to live this day, and peace to enjoy it.

Until we can truly offer up prayers of praise to God, then we are sick, and need great healing. If we can only recognize our illnesses that we bring today, then

we can also seek out Jesus, if only to touch the very edge of his clothes. With faith, we too may become well enough to give God the praise and glory that is ever within us.

Jesus wants us all to know that our presence here today is the first step. Like the woman, we have come into the very presence of God. The question for us, do we recognize that we need to touch Jesus, and will we make our way through the crowd to touch him? Jesus bestows blessings on those of us who do. Amen.