

Isaiah 43:8-13; Luke 1:1-4, 24:44-53

Grace to you, and peace, from God who is, who was and who is to come. Amen.

I sat at the dining room table with this couple. All of us tried to comprehend the words that had come from their doctor just that morning: their yet unborn child is no longer alive. "What do we do? Where do we go?", they wondered. "What is going to happen?" We talked about the world in which we live. We talked about the imperfection – the sin – that is in our world. What can cause an infant to die? And we cried.

I stood next to Dick in the intensive care unit. The intern leaned over with his stethoscope, very gently checking on Dick's wife, and then looked up and said, "That's it. She's gone." Dick's face went through changes; sadness, rage, emptiness. "She walked in here. Why can't she walk out?", he nearly shouted. And later, he and I sat and cried.

Kathy came up to me after worship. We had just read the story of the healing of the man by the Pool of Siloam near the Temple in Jerusalem. Kathy, who at the age of fourteen was legally blind. Kathy, who wore glasses like the proverbial coke-bottle bottom. "Where is that pool? How can I get there? Did that really happen?" And we talked about the Bible and we talked about how God touches us. How God heals us, but not always in the way in which we want.

We gather together this morning, on this St. Luke Sunday. We gather together at this service to talk of healing, to receive the laying on of hands. My hands are not special. Neither are Pastor Leber's. These hands can do many things: I can type; play guitar; have very sloppy handwriting. But these hands do not heal. As we come forward this morning to receive the laying on of hands, though, not these hands, but God through these hands, you will receive the blessing. The blessing and the remembrance and the reminder that, in this imperfect world, we are healed.

That healing is not always physical, and our prayers are not always answered in the manner in which we want them to be, because of this sinfulness, because of our imperfection, because infants die, and spouses get cancer. We lose our jobs, our children get arrested, our joints are so wracked with pain we can no longer respond to the urgings of our brain. The synapses in our brains start to lose their ability to communicate with each other, and so we sink deeper and deeper into that lack of communication we call Alzheimer's. There are so many addictions; alcohol and illegal drugs, cigarettes and pornography, gambling. They all exist and flourish. And we ask God for healing.

We pray for the pain to go away, for the ability to get up and walk, to breathe without wheezing, to not sit and tremble trying not to reach for that which tempts us. And yet, when all that happens, we know – as we are promised by the waters of our baptism, as we are reminded as we join together in the bread and wine, the blood and the body – that God is with us.

In the mourning of that child, in the loss of that spouse, in the inability to see, in all the aches and pains of our bodies, of our hearts, God is with us.

And so, I invite you to come forward. To be reminded of God's goodness. To hear those words of blessing, and to feel the warmth of the hands. I invite you to be healed. Perhaps not of the body, but to be healed of the heart, of the spirit. So, come, and be healed. Amen.