



WEEKLY STUDY August 20-26, 2023

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

Be Well – Week 3

Our sermon series for August is: Be Well. A series on physical, spiritual, mental and communal wellness. We are constantly inundated with cultural messages about wellness, but what does Scripture have to say? In this four week August series, we will explore stories in the book of Luke that help us see how Jesus cared for people in their full humanity – mind, body, and spirit. Join us as we seek to take care of ourselves and thus, our communities, so that we can all be well.

Our scripture this week is:

“The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. A man in the crowd called out, ‘Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth, it scarcely ever leave him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.

‘You unbelieving and perverse generation,’ Jesus replied, ‘how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring you son here.’

Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.” **Luke 9:37-43**

- 1) We are now in Week 3 of our “Be Well” theme. Week one we focused on Physical Wellness. Pastor Sam reminded us that bodies matter to God. Week two we looked at Spiritual wellness. Sam reminded here that there is a connection between faith and being well. This week we dove deeper into Mental Wellness. Sam states she felt that this is an area our culture does a pretty good job with in providing messages of mental wellness.

Question: As we’ve moved through these first 3 weeks, how do you see the inter-relatedness of Physical, Spiritual, and Mental Wellness? Where do you see positive

messages in our culture for health in these three areas? Where do you see needs for improvement?

- 2) As part of Children's time, Pastor Gracie introduced an activity to the children – and all of us – called the Starfish. This exercise provides us an easy way for stopping, settling ourselves, and taking deep breaths to center ourselves. In fact, Pastor Sam stated to the congregation that she wondered if we wouldn't all be better if we took 15 minutes and instead of a sermon did this hand exercise. Take a minute now. Stop what you are doing and stretch out your fingers like the arms of a star fish. With your other hand begin on the outside of your thumb. Breath in as you slowly trace up your thumb. Breathe out as you slowly trace down the other side (to the space between your thumb and pointer finger). Continue to do this, breathing in as you go up one side of your finger and breathing out as you go down the other side. Do this for your entire hand. As we did this as part of children's time, I could feel myself slowing down, calming, centering. And I thought, "This is what I'm going to do the next time I go to the doctor and have my blood pressure taken!"

Question: How did doing this exercise make you feel? What are the advantages for doing breathing exercises in order to "be well" in mind, body, and spirit?

- 3) Part of the importance of Sunday's sermon was Pastor Sam's statement that we have many tools for health that accompany our faith – therapy, medication, support groups, wellness practices. It's part of our discipleship – to care for ourselves with all the tools available to us. This hit home for me. Last week one of my very good friends called to tell me her husband had died. She had felt that something was not right with his health and had begged him to go to the doctor. He refused, saying there was nothing wrong with him. And then he suddenly died less than a week after that conversation. It struck me that this was an example of not availing ourselves of the tools and services that we have available to us to maintain wellness. This was dramatic. But in a similar vein, I thought about how long it took me to start attending a support group for spouses who are caregivers to loved ones who have Parkinsons Diseases. Too many times I've explained away something related to my own wellness when looking around and finding support, or medication, or exercise would have brought me to a better state of mind.

Question: Have you found yourself reluctant to use tools to keep yourself mentally well? What stands in your way?

- 4) Pastor Sam reminded us on Sunday that for us as people of faith we need to keep God's words and God's promises in our minds. Some of us have verses memorized that calm and guide in times of need. Others of us may not be great about memorizing, but we know scripture well enough to remember the meanings and pull these up in times of need. I don't think we are talking about platitudes (like God never gives you more than you can bear – a statement that does great harm in making us think if we can't bear something it's because we don't have enough faith.) Sam quoted two helpful verses to keep in mind:

Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed."

Lamentation 3:21: But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Question: What scripture gives you strength and hope?

Prayer: (Our prayer this week is the Prayer for the Sick from the Book of Common Prayer: "O God of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need: We humbly beseech you to behold, visit and relieve thy sick servants for whom our prayers are desired. Look upon us with the eyes of thy mercy; comfort us with a sense of thy goodness; preserve us from the temptations of the enemy; and give us patience under our affliction. In thy good time, restore us to health, and enable us to lead the residue of our life in thy fear, and to thy glory; and grant that finally we may dwell with thee in life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Weekly Challenges: In addition to following the suggestions on the Be Wellness calendar for this week, use the Starfish exercise daily to calm your mind, body and soul.

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)