



## “Expectations – Healing”

*Luke 4:16–23, 38-39; Luke 8:43–48*

***Enacting the kingdom of God,***

***Jesus healed – simple as that***

Today, Nazareth is a bustling city of 80,000 in Galilee, a couple of hours north of Jerusalem. It is about 70% Muslim and has a Muslim mayor, which probably surprises you. Loudspeakers dot the city, shouting out the Muslim call to prayer five times a day. But in the city center also stands

the majestic Church of the Annunciation. It is of recent design and construction and sits atop the ruins of the ancient village of Nazareth. Underneath the soaring sanctuary is a cave-like structure remembered as the house Jesus grew up in. There are paintings, murals, and mosaics from around the world, all devoted to the adoration of the Christ-child.

When Jesus had grown to adulthood, he chose Nazareth, his hometown, as the place to announce publicly his vocation. It was a typical Saturday in Nazareth. The sun was up early. It was warm. Since no work could be done on the Sabbath, many of the villagers slept a bit later. It was the day set aside to rest, as God had rested after creating the cosmos. After morning prayers and a morning meal, the villagers made their way to the small synagogue where they would hear and then discuss passages from the Torah and from the Prophets. One man would read from the Hebrew while another translated it into Aramaic, as many of the villagers neither read nor spoke Hebrew.

On this particular day, Jesus, the middle-aged son of Joseph and Mary, rose to read from the Prophets. He asked that the scroll of Isaiah be brought to him. Jesus unrolled it to the desired section and began to read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...” All eyes in the synagogue were on their neighbor as he read. A stunned silence fell across the room as Jesus proclaimed that God’s great promises were being fulfilled on that quiet Saturday morning – in and through him.

Of course, you can well imagine the reaction of the villagers to Jesus’ pronouncement. It took a few minutes for his words to sink in and then, sadly, they reacted with great fury. Jesus had grown up among them. They had changed his soiled clothes when he was an infant. They had helped to school the boy and teach him a trade. God’s anointed? Ridiculous! Blasphemous! As the confrontation worsened, Jesus’ neighbors chased him to a nearby cliff, intent on throwing him over the side. But he escaped and headed for Capernaum, a larger village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee that would serve as Jesus’ “headquarters” for his Galilean ministry.

There, Jesus taught in the synagogue and the crowds began to grow. He cast a demon out of a man, demonstrating Jesus’ authority and power to the crowd (Luke 4:36-37). Then Luke gives us a brief but fascinating story.

After casting the demon out of them, Jesus headed over to the home of Simon (Peter) whose mother-in-law had been terribly ill. Jesus simply stood over the woman, told the fever to leave, and it did. Upon which she gets up and makes dinner for everyone. What?! The first thing to note is that, at this point in Luke’s gospel, Jesus has not called any of his disciples. Thus, perhaps the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law is Jesus’ way to prepare Simon for Jesus’ call to discipleship.

Sadly, Simon’s mother-in-law is not named, as was so often the case in the patriarchy of the ancient world. Nonetheless, “she serves as a pattern for all who would subsequently be delivered by Jesus’ word and then

express their gratitude through serving.”<sup>1</sup> There may be only a few sentences devoted to her story, but she is an example to us all.

### **Another woman**

Sometime later, Jesus has returned from the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and is approached by Jairus, a synagogue leader (named, of course) whose daughter has fallen deathly ill. He begs Jesus to save his daughter and Jesus heads for Jairus’s home.

But on the way, a woman (unnamed, of course) presses through the crowds. Because the woman was ritualistically unclean and untouchable, you can almost picture some people in the crowd struggling to avoid her touch as she surges toward Jesus. Coming up from behind, she touches Jesus’ clothing, believing, as did her contemporaries, that Jesus’ power would be carried even in his clothing. Though the woman trusted that by touching Jesus’ clothing she would be healed, in what must have been a moment of overwhelming joy, she is healed instantly and feels the overwhelming power of that healing. Jesus senses the woman’s touch, turns to her, and affirms that her faith has made her well. Fred Craddock notes:

“...the relationship of the woman to Jesus is not private. True, the crowd did not know she had touched Jesus and been healed, but Jesus would not let it remain a case of one person in a crowd receiving God’s blessing and it remaining her own secret. Jesus calls the woman out, in front of all the people she tells what happened, and there before them Jesus affirms her faith and blesses her. She has not only witnessed to the people but now the people have to deal with her story and with her. After the prescribed ritual (Lev. 15:25–30) she will be restored to that community, and now after twelve years they will have to accept her...Faith is indeed personal, but it certainly is not private.”<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, there is more to Jesus’ act of kindness than meets the eye. The woman’s healing is more than physical. No longer will she be unclean. She will be taken back into the community. She will find wholeness and salvation. Her steadfast faith in the power of Jesus will enable her to begin rebuilding right relationships with her neighbors and loved ones. She had seen for herself that the Kingdom of God was arriving in and through Jesus. But she would have no idea of the price he would pay to usher in the Kingdom!

### **Daily Bible Readings** *More on Jesus’ healings – all from a few chapters in Luke’s gospel*

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Luke 5:12-16</b>	Jesus heals a leper
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Luke 5:17-26</b>	Jesus heals a paralytic
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Luke 6:6-11</b>	Jesus heals a man with a withered hand
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Luke 7:1-10</b>	Jesus heals a centurion’s son
<b>Friday</b>	<b>Luke 7:11-17</b>	Jesus raises a widow’s son
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Luke 8:26-39</b>	Jesus heals a man possessed by demons

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<sup>1</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, “The Gospel of Luke,” *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 111.

<sup>2</sup> Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 119–120.