As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Christ Jesus came into this world to teach, to preach and to heal. This is the work of ministry, his and ours. Entrusted with the great Good News of God’s new realm, it is ours to give away to others: to teach, to preach and to heal. Through this ministry—his and ours—the Kingdom of God comes upon the earth.

For Jesus, healing was not so much about “curing” in the narrow sense as we might think of it today, as it was part and parcel of the in-breaking of God’s new kingdom. Remember: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised and the poor have good news preached to them? All because the Spirit of the Lord dwells in Jesus the Messiah. In his ministry, healing is always a sign of something much greater, a sign of God’s compassion for people, especially for “the least of these.” It is about the healing of community and relationship, wholeness for individuals and for the nations. Healing is for one and for all and its purpose is reconciliation and new life. The healing of individual persons is centered in the restoration of wholeness to society. And it comes to us through the community of faithful believers, not simply through one “miracle worker.”

As disciples, together, as the church, the Body of Christ in the world, we pull things together, bring people together, bring resources together to make possible the shalom, the wholeness, the healing and justice and peace God intends, in human hearts and in this world.

If you were listening carefully last Sunday, we actually heard this described for us in the Youth Sunday sermons of our four graduating seniors. And if you missed it—take some time this week and go to our website, find the service and listen in. You know, Emily, Natalia, Leo and Cassy aren’t that much younger than Andrew, Simon, James and John were when Jesus called them to be disciples. And as they spoke to us, so honestly, faithfully, transparently, about their own lives and faith, we heard, in effect, the impact of the healing power of this congregation in their lives.

What they described shows us to be a place that calls us to be our best and offer that to each other. We heard them say back to us that this is a place where we find community and support, through the good times and the really hard times. Where we find acceptance and arms-wide-open love. A community in which we can overcome our fear of failure or our limited perception of all we can be.

We heard ourselves portrayed as a community where we find beauty and praise God and share our gifts in art and music. We heard them share with us the life-transforming impact of the youth service project mission trips. How their eyes were opened to their own privilege and to the needs of the world and how relationships with real people in
unknown and unfamiliar places helped them see what justice-making love and service can be in our lives. How we can connect with people despite our differences. How we can, must, give back to people and communities in need. We heard ourselves revealed to be a place where we find purpose and courage and strength to go on. A community where worship shapes and forms and sustains and inspires us. Where we actually experience what it means to “Be the Hope” for one another and for our world. We are, as one said, a community of love.

That’s about the best description of God’s holistic shalom as I have ever heard, and of how that happens in community. Healing and wholeness for every person, every beloved child of God. Healing and wholeness for the places of brokenness and need in our world. Jesus gives all his disciples the power to set people free, starting with ourselves and stretching out as far as our imagination will take us. No boundaries. No one off limits. No one expendable. No one not worth bothering with.

The healing power of God’s Good News in Christ Jesus is strong enough and deep enough and wide enough and trustworthy enough to overcome all brokenness and make the world whole.

Let us give thanks, and pray to God to continue to work in us and through us, that the power of God’s love might indeed accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine.

Thanks be to God!

AMEN