

Week 23

Jesus Heals

Guide: Coming to Know the Healer



As we continue to grow in our desire to know Jesus more intimately, we come to a week of reflection on Jesus the healer. This week's prayer brings us to see several important aspects of God's love for us in Jesus. Most of all, we enter more deeply into the heart of this *man for others* and come to understand a love that heals.

This is not about contemplating the divine power of Jesus or how he repaired the bodies or lives of a number of people during the three years of his public ministry on earth. This is about our coming to know more deeply this week another aspect of who Jesus is.

Jesus is able to heal because love heals. The more complete the love, the more profound is the healing. Jesus' love is penetrating. He doesn't hold back any of himself in loving. He is not put off by disfigurement or fear of contamination or even religious conventions that place limits to his loving. He is not afraid to touch and touch deeply. His heart is full of compassion. Jesus can so suffer with the one who suffers that he enters into the depths of—even the roots of—the pain of those he loves. Jesus loves so deeply he can understand and love the paralysis that causes the paralysis, the blindness that underlies the blindness, the leprosy that breaks out in leprosy. Jesus heals by embracing. Jesus embraces the inner illness that seems so untouchable or rigid or hidden in the darkness of denial. Jesus can love the whole person into *wellness*, precisely because he loves the whole person in *brokenness*. With such great love Jesus the lover can say, "Get up and start moving freely again," or "Open your eyes and see again."

This week we let ourselves become more deeply fascinated by, enthralled with, the way Jesus loves. The readings are our entry points into being present to those scenes of healing. However, the depth and power of our prayer this week, in the background moments throughout our days, will be *how we become more and more aware of how Jesus loves in the real scenes of our life*. We will come to see the meaning of love and the concrete ways we are being drawn to be with Jesus in his loving. Who throughout our day seems diseased or paralyzed or dysfunctional or blind or outcast by others? What external disorder or inner infection needs

penetrating, embracing love? And, especially where I can't imagine myself loving that deeply and completely—because I taste the inner resistance of it—I can imagine Jesus' desire to love and heal.

Each and every day this week, we can be amazed and in awe as the Healer reveals the limitless love of his heart.

Some Practical Help for Getting Started This Week

Getting started these weeks involves listening, watching, and experiencing the feelings that come to us. We want to make the movement from reading the Gospel passages to fixing those scenes in our imagination, to letting healing become the lens through which we view the people and circumstances of our daily lives. And then the grace will be in our nightly expression of gratitude and intimacy with Jesus. Larry Gillick, SJ, says it so well in this week's "For the Journey": "In Christ there is the freeing from and the freeing for, the healing from and the healing for." By this time in the retreat, we are experiencing the liberation that has been offered us. As we are drawn into deeper intimacy with Jesus, we are experiencing how we are set free to be one with him in loving the way he loves—completely. This is what happens with lovers. With each and every week, we are watching as Jesus shows us who he is, and we fall more deeply in love with him, and we want to be *with* him. *Attraction* always draws to *the desire for closeness*. And with each week's movements and graces, we want more and more to be *like* Jesus.

Jesus heals to set hearts free to give glory to God and then to be more responsive to God's movement in hearts that are free to say "yes" to give their self in service of others. When we are loved and healed—as all of us have been—our lives are not our own any more. We have become reoriented. We become *for others—and precisely with Jesus for others*.

We get started this week mindful of the power of these movements and their ultimate goal. This retreat is about letting God so work in us to liberate and transform how we *choose*—in fact, *how we make the most fundamental and most ordinary choices of our lives*.

Each morning, as I prepare my mind and heart for the day's reflection on Jesus as lover and healer, and each night, as I give thanks and reseal the intimacy of my growing relationship with Jesus, I can't avoid experiencing how this very process is liberating. The movements of these exercises can't help but change the way I make the smallest of choices about how I live.

As I realize what graces might be offered me as I watch and contemplate Jesus, I can ask with great focus throughout the week for the graces that are arising in my desires.

For the Journey: After the Healing

In praying this week with pictures of Jesus curing people, we are offered opportunities to reflect on how his curing us has taken hold in the whole of our lives. It is too simplistic to

see Jesus only as a physical healer. Physical well-being is not the definitive sign of God's loving care or presence.

When we consider Jesus' healing of a person in the Gospels, watch the aftermath, the "What then?" of the encounter. Jesus sends the person from some inner condition to the outer world and relationships around him or her. The most basic energy of God's will as expressed in the life and words of Jesus is, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." Being physically healed is a sign of being freed from not really having life to the full.

What we watch and pray with this week is the process of Jesus' bringing this world to life in him and how each of us is meant to come to life for this world. The Spiritual Exercises are a gift from God given to us through the struggles of Ignatius to free himself from the inner diseases so that he might seek and do the will of God in living outwardly alive.

The will of God is not a mystical needle in a cosmic haystack for which we can spend our lives searching. That would not be a loving God who would play with us like that. His will is to love us and bring us to full life. Love, by its very nature, urges revelation. It is God's will that we trust what we faithfully choose to do. For our part, we struggle, like Ignatius, to be honest about those areas of our lives that are not alive, which are diseased and need the healing touch of Jesus. This is why we take such long lingering views of Jesus bringing others to life and this life includes the "What next?" the follow-up, the follow-through, the following.

In Christ there is the freeing from and the freeing for, the healing from and the healing for. Jesus heals not for the personal contentment of the man or woman of faith but rather for the personal completion that is received in joining his mission of bringing others to life. The will of God is that each of us be healed from not believing in God's love for us and for this world. Our blindness, our paralysis, our being deaf, our being dead, are all embraced by Christ, and he takes away our good excuses that once confined and defined us. He is sent to touch us and then send us to embrace this bent world.

In praying this week, we pray with the many calls of those who were in such need for his healing. We pray with the many calls he offers us to go out, go beyond, and go into the world around us. Is there a call from you and to you in there?

In These or Similar Words . . .

Dear Jesus,

I feel so strongly the power of your love and of your healing. I see you from my spot in the crowd and watch how you touch and love so many, curing and healing. I am so afraid to ask for healing, to risk your love. But the kindness and warmth in your voice pulls at me and invites me to ask. I look in your kind eyes, and suddenly I am not in a crowd of people but we

are alone. You are looking at me and listening with total attention as I ask: Lord, you have the power to make me well if only you want to.

If only you want to. Your love for me is so complete and so deep that healing me is a part of all of that. Your ability to heal me and your love for me are both so complete, if only I can accept that. I feel the warmth of your hand on me, healing the ways I am crippled, loving the ways I am crippled, and inviting me to love my own imperfection.

Now I feel your healing love flooding through me. I feel your strength where I have none and your courage where mine is so lacking. Your healing comes with an invitation: "Join me." May I join you? Can I stay by your side and continue to feel that love and courage? Help me to be healed from my unbelief.

Help me to realize that my being crippled is sometimes a choice I make, a choice that is crippling in itself.

Please, dearest friend and brother, Jesus. Heal me from the many ways I am unable to love and accept others. Heal me from the many ways the pains of my past life create such scars on my ability to care for others. Teach me how to be with you, side by side, healing and caring for people with the love I receive from you. Most of all, teach me how the power of your love can allow me to forgive those you love so much.

I treasure your love for me and your companionship with me in this journey of healing and forgiveness. Thank you for the many ways you love me and heal me.

Scripture Readings

Luke 4:31–37

Luke 5:12–15

Luke 5:17–28

Luke 13:10–17

Luke 18:35–43