

Sermon Series: "I Am" Part 6
"The Father's Healing"
Pastor Dale Campfield - February 6th, 2011

Intro:

Matt 28:19 "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Intro:

Today we continue with our sermon series entitled: "I Am".

The Goal of this series: To fall more in love with who God is, becoming a passionate follower of Christ, desiring to walk in obedience to His teachings.

How will we do this: By Learning Who the Father Is.

Jesus asks the question of Peter...

Mark 8:29

"Who do you say that I am?"

Let me ask you again: "Who do you say that He is?"

RECAP:

Part 1: I Am Your Father - and because of this...

Part 2: I Am Your Protector - He will fight for us.

Part 3: I Am Your Provider - He is our source.

Part 4: I Am Your Companion - He is our friend, who will never leave us.

Part 5: I Am Your Teacher - He teaches us all things that ensure our success in life.

Part 6: I Am Your Healer – He is our Jehovah Rapha; emotional, spiritual and physical healer.

Today's Sermon Title: "The Father's Healing"

God the Healer (Jehovah Rapha)

Exodus 15

Butch and I had the honor of being with Phillip and Lynn Miles this last week as they celebrated their church's 30 year anniversary. We had a great time and thank you for your prayers. As well, I want to thank Pastor John Baird for his ministry last Sunday. Great job!

Illus: Lady, lost, looking for her car

While in Myrtle Beach, Butch and I found ourselves at the mall buying some shoes. Upon leaving the mall and beginning to drive out the lot, my bride noticed a little old lady that had lost her car. She was wondering all over the lot, for who knows how long looking for her car. Butch befriended her, invited her to join us as we drove around the mall looking for her car, as she pushed the lock on her remote control keys.

This beautiful woman was hurting in many ways. It strikes me that this individual was in need of three types of healing that cold day. She certainly needed physical attention, for she could barely walk due to two knee surgeries, shoulder surgeries and other ailments. She needed emotional support because she was sad and afraid and felt hopeless in finding her car. And I'm assuming that she needed some spiritual help as well, though she did seem to have faith in God. Maybe you've had a time in your life when you felt that way. Maybe not looking for your car, but looking for a healing, or strength, or a word from God.

Perhaps you're dealing with a physical frailty right now and you're exhausted emotionally. Or your past hurts are still causing present pain. And there's a good chance that you've slipped spiritually at some point in your life and lost your way. One of my roles as a pastor is to pray with people when they are broken physically, emotionally or spiritually. The fact is, if we were to add up the amount of agony and pain represented in this congregation it would literally take our breath away.

This morning our focus is on yet another facet of who God is as our Father, the great I AM – Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. The one who heals all - the Father of all. This name is first revealed shortly after the Israelites were unshackled from their bondage in Egypt. They have just passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. The people are excited to finally be free and so they express their praise in the first part of Exodus 15. Look at **verses 1-3**: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name." God is referred to by two of His names (Elohim and Yahweh) in this song of praise that lasts for twenty-one verses.

But then their praising turns into a time of protesting. In **verse 22** we read that Moses led them into the "Desert of Shur." "Shur" means a "wall." And that's exactly how they felt. They had run

into a wall of despair instead of a window to blessing. Some of you feel like you've hit a wall. After wandering in the wilderness for three days, and having no water to drink, the people turn on Moses at a place called Marah, which means "bitterness." By the way, this is the name Naomi chose for herself after experiencing incredible pain and disappointment in Ruth 1:20.

God's people go from giving praise to grumbling their protests because when they finally find some water, they soon discover that it had a very bitter taste. Talk about disappointment! They were probably very excited to locate this refreshment only to have their expectations shattered. In verse 24, they put Moses on the spot: "What are we to drink?" The people are angry with God but they take it out on a person. We do that as well, don't we? Someone has said that anger is a magnet in search of metal, and the closest metal was Moses. We tend to take things out on others when we don't get what we want when we want it.

When we're pumped up everything seems great but then there's that inevitable let-down. We certainly experienced that as a church during the 21 days of fasting and prayer this year. We were riding high and then came back down to reality as we headed into some deep and bitter waters. The Israelites saw God provide in making a way through the Red Sea but now they're thirsty. On top of that, now they have a bitter taste in their mouth. Some of you may feel that way this morning. You've gone from high expectations to great disappointment to heavy discouragement. As a church, we began 3 years ago with expectations high, and now, some have fallen back into some disappoint because you thought we would be further along by now.

I want you to notice that their gratitude turns to griping when the memory of God's faithfulness is somehow forgotten, and it only took them three days to land in the ditch of despair. Bitterness can blind us to the promises of God. They had forgotten that life in Egypt was terrible even though they ate bitter herbs as part of the Passover to remember the bitterness of slavery (Exodus 12:8). But now freedom from Egypt has also left them feeling bitter because their expectations are shattered.

Moses does what he should do and cries out to the Lord. Instead of protesting, he prays. That's what hard times can do for us. When we're in pain, we must pray. God answers Moses by showing him a simple piece of wood. Moses takes the wood and whips it into the water and the water immediately becomes sweet. God then initiates a test and tells them in verse 26: "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." God is linking their holiness with their health as He declares one more name for Himself: Jehovah Rapha. In the midst of their bitterness and hurt, God reveals Himself as their healer.

The word Rapha is used some sixty times in the Old Testament and means, "to restore, to heal, or to cure" physically, emotionally and spiritually. In 1 Kings 18:30, we get a picture of what Rapha means when we read that Elijah "repaired" (Rapha) the altar of Jehovah. In 2 Kings 2:21, God "heals" (Rapha) the water when Elisha throws salt in the spring. The word has the idea of restoring something to its original state.

Sometimes we are in need of healing in all three areas at the same time like David was in...

Psalm 6:2-3

Emotional: “Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint...”

Physical: “O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony...”

Spiritual: “My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long?”

At other times, one of these areas seems to take precedence as the bitterness that comes from brokenness breaks through. God reveals Himself as Jehovah Rapha when we are in need of...

Emotional Healing. Jehovah Rapha heals emotional hurts and broken hearts.

Psalm 147:3 “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

The word “broken” means “to burst, to break into pieces, to crush and to smash.” Some of you feel that way right now. Your emotional pain is overwhelming. Friend, whatever pain you’re carrying around, hand it to the Healer today. Some of you have incredibly intense hurt that I can’t begin to relate to. Maybe it’s something that happened when you were younger. Or perhaps it just happened yesterday. In the midst of your tears, cry out to Jehovah Rapha and ask Him to put you back together again. Related to this, relational ruptures can cause emotional pain. If you’re struggling with a broken relationship, I encourage you to do what you can to make peace as Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Physical Healing. Some of you are experiencing a tough time right now as you’re trying to process the pain and discouragement that comes from physical difficulties. Maybe it’s personal pain or maybe you’re devastated by the news you’ve received about a family member or a friend. Whatever the case, when our bodies don’t work right, we can end up feeling uptight. At times like this, we need to ask Jehovah Rapha to do His healing work in our lives. The Bible is filled with examples of God’s healing touch.

In **2 Kings 20:5-6** we read that Hezekiah became very ill and was about to die. As a result of intense intercession, he was healed and his life was even extended. This is really an amazing account:

“This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you...I will add fifteen years to your life.”

In the Gospels we see that Jesus spent a surprising amount of time healing people.

Spiritual Healing. Jehovah Rapha sees that we are spiritually sick and He provides healing and wholeness through the shed blood of Jesus on the Cross. Our diagnosis is bad and our prognosis is terminal. Jeremiah 17:9 records the incurable condition of the human heart: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” We are sinners who have been inflicted with the disease of death and destruction and we’re in desperate need of a new heart.

Early in His ministry, Jesus got up in the synagogue one day and quoted from the Book of Isaiah,

“He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed” (**Luke 4:18**). Once we are set free spiritually, Jesus can break every other bondage we are under, including addictions and deep-seated sin patterns. While it’s certainly true that Jesus healed a lot of people physically, He is always more interested in curing our sin problem. Do you remember what Jesus passed along to John the Baptist when he wanted to know if He was really the Messiah? Listen to these words from Matthew 11:5: “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.” Evangelism, not physical healing, must always be the main point of our ministry as well.

The pervasiveness of sin in our souls is pictured very vividly in Isaiah 1:5-6: “Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness — only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil.” Our depravity is total, affecting every part of our lives. Verse 18 provides the good news, showing the cleansing power of forgiveness: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

Passing the Test

When the Israelites were faced with three days of no water, **Numbers 15:25** says that God tested them. Likewise, when we go through tough times emotionally, physically or spiritually, we are really entering a testing time. There are at least **nine principles** to keep in mind **that will help us pass the test and better understand the healing power of Jehovah Rapha.**

1. Trials and troubles can get us back on track.

I have heard some people in the past tell me that his difficulties led him to read the Bible and get close to the Lord. Others have said that this past year was extremely difficult but it was actually a blessing because he fully surrendered to Christ as a result of the pain. That’s exactly what the psalmist said in...

Psalm 119:67, 71

“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word...It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.”

Beth Moore suggests that we all have “empty places” in our lives as a result of brokenness and dissatisfaction is a “secret abyss” for many of us. When we’re hurting, we must run to Jehovah Rapha and resist the urge to fill our emptiness with things that will not satisfy.

2. Sometimes our pain is related to personal sin.

When you’re hurting physically or emotionally, it’s good to do a quick inventory to see if you have any unconfessed sin in your life. In...

Psalm 32:3-4, David links his physical pain and his emotional agony to his personal sin: “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.”

This theme is continued in Psalm 38:3, 17-18: “Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin...For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.” Let me say it again. Personal sin may be a contributing factor to your illness and therefore should be taken seriously.

3. Not all illness is directly linked to personal sin.

We can certainly say that all illness ultimately is a result of Adam and Eve’s sin, but we must be careful to not link every problem we have to some sin in our lives. This was the mistake that Job’s friends made when they kept accusing him of wrongdoing. In their minds, Job was suffering because he had somehow sinned. Let’s be careful here. Some of you beat yourself up mercilessly as you blame yourself for your own pain. Others of you need to back off and stop giving your perspective on why someone else is suffering. Jesus addressed this prevalent mindset when he was asked to explain why a certain man was blind. His disciples wanted to know whether the man had sinned or his parents. Jesus answered in...

John 9:3

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”

4. Its OK to go to professionals but go to the Great Physician first. While there are some people who refuse to get any help because they want to trust God alone for their healing, it’s my understanding that God often works His healing through doctors, other trained professionals, and through medicine. My bride has some of the greatest doctors ever, to which we thank the Lord for bringing them into our lives! Remember that the bitter waters at Marah became better only when something was added to them. God could have made them sweet apart from any other means, but he chose to use the wood. Likewise God can heal with just a word from His mouth, but He uses other instruments as well. Having said that, what Asa did in the Old Testament is a warning to us. When he was sick, he didn’t go to God first but instead went right to the doctor. This is described in 2 Chronicles 16:12: “Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians.” Here’s the point. Don’t bypass the Great Physician on the way to the doctor’s office.

5. We need the community of faith.

James 5:14-16 describes what we should do when we are sick.

“First of all, call for the Elders of the church and ask for prayer. Second, confess your sins to others. Third, pray for each other.”

These steps are only possible if you’re plugged into a community of faith. When you’re hurting, you need the help of others. But sometimes those around us don’t always know how to help. Listen to this story called “Comforters” (adapted from Linda Mae Richardson).

When I was diagnosed with a deadly disease...

My first friend came and expressed shock by saying, "I can't believe you're sick. I always thought you were so active and healthy." He left and I felt alienated and somehow very different.

My second friend came and brought me information about different treatments and gave me his opinion about what to do. He left and I felt scared and confused.

My third friend came and tried to answer my "whys?" and told me God may be disciplining me for some sin in my life. She left and I felt guilty.

My fourth friend came and told me that that if my faith was greater God would heal me. He left and I felt like my faith must be inadequate.

My fifth friend came and told me to remember that all things work together for good. She left and I felt angry.

My sixth friend never came at all. I felt sad and alone.

My seventh friend came and held my hand and said, "I care. I'm here. I want to help you through this." She left, I felt loved, and I knew everything was going to be OK.

6. Faith is a force in healing.

Some people mistakenly believe that if we just have enough faith, we can be healed of everything. At the other end of the spectrum, others think that God does not heal today and so they don't even pray about their problems. The proper biblical perspective is this. Pray earnestly for healing to Jehovah Rapha, and have faith to believe that He can heal you, but be careful about demanding that He answer your prayers according to your will. We are to pray according to His will. Joni Eareckson Tada, who is in a wheelchair as a result of a diving accident adds, "God certainly can, and sometimes does, heal people in a miraculous way today. But the Bible does not teach that He will always heal those who come to him in faith. He sovereignly reserves the right to heal or not heal as He sees fit" ("A Step Further," Zondervan, 1978, Page 127). Tim Hansel writes: "I have prayed hundreds, if not thousands of times for the Lord to heal me...and He finally healed me of the need to be healed."

Having said that, we need to keep **Mark 6:5-6** in mind. This passage explains the importance of faith to Jesus:

"He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith."

Faith somehow unleashes the healing power of God. James 4:2 says, "You do not have, because you do not ask God."

7. Sometimes healing takes place in unusual ways. Tony Campolo tells a story about being in a church where he was asked to pray for a man who had cancer. He prayed boldly for the man's healing and that next week he got a telephone call from the man's wife. She said, "You prayed for my husband. He had cancer." Campolo thought when he heard her use the past tense that his cancer had been eradicated! But then she said, "He died." Campolo felt terrible. But she continued, "Don't feel bad. When you saw him he was filled with anger. He knew he was going to be dead in a short period of time, and he hated God. He was 58 years old, and he wanted to see his children and grandchildren grow up. He was angry that this all-powerful God didn't take away his sickness and heal him. He would lie in bed and curse God. The more his anger grew towards God, the more miserable he was to everybody around him. It was an awful thing to be in his presence." But the lady told Campolo, "After you prayed for him, a peace had come over him and a joy had come into him. Tony, the last three days have been the best days of our lives. We've sung. We've laughed. We've read Scripture. We prayed. Oh, they've been wonderful days. And I called to thank you for laying your hands on him and praying for healing." And then she said something incredibly profound. Tony, she said, "He wasn't cured, but he was healed." (Tony Campolo, "Year of Jubilee," Preaching Today Tape #212).

8. Don't be careless about communion. In a few moments we are going to celebrate communion to help us remember what Christ did for us on the Cross. My sense is that we don't think enough about the seriousness of this ordinance. In 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, Paul tells Christians to approach the elements with a sense of awe and to make sure we are living in unity with others. If we don't, we're in danger of actually becoming sick or even dying: "For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep."

9. The Cross of Christ is the source of healing.

The Jehovah who heals in the Old Testament is the Jesus who heals in the New. Don't miss the significance behind the wood from a tree providing sweetness to the bitter water. All of our problems began at a tree in the Garden of Eden and our sin problem is resolved because another piece of wood was used to hold up our Sin Substitute on the Cross.

Isaiah 53:5 says that "the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

1 Peter 2:24 picks up on this prophecy: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." Only Jesus can sweeten the bitterness of life. He is the bondage breaker as Leviticus 26:13 says: "I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high."

Making the Bitter Better

Maybe you've fallen recently or found yourself lost in the parking lot of life and it feels like you've crashed and gotten lost so quickly you don't even know what happened. Whether you're

hurting emotionally, physically or spiritually, turn to Jehovah Rapha right now. Let's go back to **Exodus 15** for a moment. After God made the sour waters sweet, He then led the Israelites to a place called Elim. We read in **verse 27** that Elim had twelve springs and seventy palm trees. God led them to a place of plenty. Even if we're not cured we can be healed by Jesus. He is both the wood and the living water as He said in John 7:37: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." The only way to go from Marah to Elim is to turn to Jesus, who is Jehovah Rapha.

If you're in need of healing right now, whether emotional, physical, or spiritual (or all three) I invite you to join our team this morning for prayer right after we take communion together.

Remember, He is the Great I AM!

And as you do.... You wait, you watch, you'll see!

Coming up...

IMAGINE MORE SERMON SERIES