

Healing Eucharist
BOS Healing lections
November 10, 2013

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Belvedere
The Rev. Shari Young Preacher

If you are a veteran, please raise your hand.....Thank you (applause)

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,

because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to comfort all who mourn;

Scholars are not sure who is speaking, while in the book of Isaiah, it doesn't seem to be Isaiah speaking. This mystery prophet speaks to us across 3000 years. Overflowing with God's immanence and presence the prophet proclaims the divine intention that all God's people be totally healed: bodily, spiritually, individually and socially. These are words of light to all people

These are the words in scripture, perhaps from a papyrus, that Jesus read almost 800 years later when he stood up in his local congregation and emerged into the public eye.

“Today these works are fulfilled in your hearing.” he said.

There is a phrase in the modern Jewish tradition “Tikkum Olam,” “repairing the world,” has become synonymous with social and environment action. It originated in the 16th century with a story told by the Jewish mystic Rabbi Luria.

The story is called “The Shattering of the Vessels.”

At the beginning of time, God's presence filled the universe. When God decided to bring this world into being, to make room for creation, He first drew in His breath, contracting Himself. From that contraction darkness was created. And when God said, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3), the light that came into being filled the darkness, and ten holy vessels came forth, each filled with primordial light.

In this way God sent forth those ten vessels, like a fleet of ships, each carrying its cargo of light. Had they all arrived intact, the world would have been perfect. But the vessels were too fragile to contain such a powerful, divine light. They broke open, split asunder, and all the holy sparks were scattered like sand, like seeds, like stars. else.

This is the story of why we were created — to gather the sparks, no matter where they are hidden. God created the world so that the Holy People could gather up the holy sparks.

And when enough holy sparks have been gathered, the broken vessels will be restored, and tikkun olam, the repair of the world, awaited so long, will finally be complete.

The encouragement is that each of us, in our small and uniquely important way, have been given a gift which can help bring forth a light into the darkness of the world. We are all light seekers and light bearers. The vocation of each of us is to repair the world.

In honor of the Jewish people, and following the theme of broken shards of glass and the urgent need to redeem the world from darkness, I want to name something painful

Yesterday and today are the 75th anniversary of the Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, the very public beginning of a great darkness: Hitler's persecution of the Jewish people. 91 people were killed, 30,000 arrested and put in concentration camp, homes, hospitals and schools ransacked, 1000 synagogues burned, 7000 Jewish businesses destroyed.

The shards, the little bits, of light which we each gather, are very important. Hatred is still stalking and attacking.

Our vocation is to be both light-bearers, to be healers, and to receive healing. We delude ourselves if we think we can do these things without community, without each other.

The James lesson, which has practical instruction for healing, is undergirded by the community. We pray together for healing of the world and for individuals among us who need healing; we sing songs of praise to God together; today we will have elders pray over those who need healing; we confess our sins one to another, and we pray for each other.

Great light is generated when we are together; by the presence of God among us, and with the shards of light that each of us bring in our imperfect and essential way.

In the Luke lesson, we see Jesus in his ministry. As he said of himself, he is proclaim the release of captivity from the horror of the disease of leprosy to 10 men who approach him, shouting for mercy.

There are several themes which jump out at once: Jesus' immediate willingness to heal them, and how quickly 9 out of the 10 forget the source of their new wholeness. Gratitude. Turning back to praise and thank God.

And also the theme of the outsider, the stranger. It was the Samaritan, the least likely one, who completed the action of wholeness; who saw and thanked God. It was the outcast who was hated by the others who recognized the light. We are reminded again and again in our tradition that truth, and beauty and wholeness are not necessarily where we expect them to be.

We are reminded to be willing to be surprised; to be open to God's presence in the other and in world around us.

To both receive the light and healing which is offered to us; and to gather up the bits of light that we might bring healing to the world.