

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ. Amen.

Think about a biblical story that has healing in it. Maybe it's when Jesus
heals the blind man or when he heals a leper or the healing of the paralytic.
Something about these stories give us hope. These stories tell us that
miracles can happen when one is suffering in mind, body, or spirit. It's easy
to love these stories because of the hope that they give us.

Today's epistle lesson from James is one of my favorite passages in the
Bible. I'm awe struck each time I read it because it reminds me like the
healings of Jesus, that I, that all people have various forms of healing in their
lives. The text also gives practical advice of what to do during the healing
process.

The author writes: “Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”

I love this passage because for it's that reminder to say to me, to us ~ wait a minute, slow down and pray. It's so easy for us to try to control what's happening in our lives. If we are sick, we try to do everything that we can do feel better. Sometimes, we may even try everything that we know of to alleviate symptoms and forget to pray. Other times, when we might be having a bad day, we may get frustrated and angry with whatever is happening and get caught up and forget to tell God what's going on.

I remember one morning like this for me while I was in seminary. I had to take one of our cars to the garage to get the oil changed. I only had an hour and a half to drive to Mechanicsburg, drop the car off and get back to campus to do a worship practicum ~ to enact a wedding of all things. And of course, I couldn't find my car keys. I ripped our apartment apart. I checked every possible place that I could think of and still no car keys. I was angry at myself and frustrated because I needed to get the car to Mechanicsburg and get back for class since I was in the group leading the practicum that day. As my frustration grew, I called a friend and asked her if one of her girls may have taken my car keys home with them the night before. I started to tell my friend what I had to do and that I didn't have time for this. After listening to me, she calmly said to me, Wendy, did you pray to God, did you ask God to calm you down and not to be stressed over your car keys? And of course, at that point, my answer to her, was no.

It's so easy to get caught up in what worries us ~ an illness, a test result, a broken relationship, an argument with your spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, or with your parents or a friend, SATs, tests, performance evaluations, the list could go on and on.

Are any among you suffering? We all have moments when we suffer. We all have moments when we don't feel good physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. There may be times when we don't feel whole; and those times are hard.

James reminds us to pray, not only during these times of trial, but also in times of joyfulness. He also says to those who are sick to go to the elders and have them pray over them. Saint Nicholas has a variety of ways to pray for you, for all of us ~ yes, there are two full-time pastors here; there are also Stephen ministers here, and there is the prayer list that everyone receives each Sunday on the weekly so we can all pray for those on the list. We can

and should try to pray for each other. We can pray together as friends; as brothers and sisters in Christ.

In those times of heartache, unending worrying, illnesses, in times of joy ~ in all of life's circumstances, let us remember to pray to God individually and together. God will grant healing...but it may not be the type of healing that we want or expect, but God will be there, he will listen, and he will work with each of us as we face life's trials.

Let us pray....most gracious God, we give you thanks for everything that you do for us. We pray this day that you guide us and help us to remember to pray to you in all of our ups and downs in life. Help us to remember that you are always there raising us up on your wings and sheltering us, even if we do not understand it. Grant your healing presence to all your children in mind, body, and spirit from whatever ails them. We ask all of these things through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.