

Healing the City Series  
**Healing Through the Cross:**  
**Becoming Ministers of Reconciliation**

Eric Cepin  
Aug. 4, 2024

You heard two texts (Luke 17:11-19 and Mark 1:40-45) read today about lepers: people with a contagious disease which causes them to lose their nerve endings. Because it was so contagious, you couldn't be part of a community.

In leadership meetings, we've been praying and listening to the Holy Spirit and recently, we felt like the Village is like a leper colony in that when you get healed from leprosy, you are no longer contagious but you don't have a new arm. As I was pondering these two stories, I wrote this poem:

## Leper

**I was once a leper, no love for me, no hope, no friends, just misery. A man showed me mercy, though humble his face, Not much to look at, but full of grace.**

**He saw my disease and his anger grew, Yet mercy he gave, and healing too. He offered his friendship, his hand did he lend, Now in a community, healed we mend.**

**Though missing some parts, and seeking a role, I am known and loved, a part of the whole.**

I particularly like the last line: I am personally a follower of Jesus who wrestles with anxiety all the time and also has so many other parts yet to be healed. This makes me think of the Village: we have stepped into healing and yet we're still missing parts. The truth is that we're known, loved, and part of the whole.

At the Village, we have a motto, "***Healing the City One Person at a Time.***"

We often think about healing as miraculous: cancer, etc. which is a healing we are hoping to see in all of our lives. But every person whom Jesus healed died, including Lazarus who had to die twice. We need a more permanent healing that is eternal.

The Village is about healing through the cross and becoming a minister of reconciliation.

I want to work through **3 ideas** about Healing: **it begins at the cross, it transforms us, and it flows out to the world**

**I: Healing Begins at the Cross:** Jesus addresses our sin, brokenness, and our separation from God. All our poor choices and sin and woundedness are all separating us from God. The cross is the place where we find healing: we are cruciform people. We are people of the cross because we believe something profound happened at the cross. Let's look at Isa 53:5:

The Cross as the Ultimate Source of Healing

**Isaiah 53:5 (NIV) - "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."**

I want you to put your hand on the person next to you and imagine an empty cross while you listen to this verse.

The cross takes all the separation that we feel and gives us peace, the thing that heals. If you need healing, you are in constant disruption. The cross offers our peace instead of the chaos we feel.

## II: Healing Transforms us

Healing as Inner Transformation:

**Romans 12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

Roman 12 is another key part of this; we have a song about this.

The "*therefore*" is there because the verses before it are a doxology about who God is. In Romans 12:1, Paul is saying "Because you aren't God, I urge you to fan the flame, do whatever you can, to be a cheerleader in view of God's mercy."

It's a cross with Jesus NOT on it. Since you cannot narrate your life by yourself, you should offer your bodies as living sacrifices. I used to think this was putting myself on an altar. It's actually a one-time thing: *it's an identity*. You're saying, "NOT MY STORY, YOUR STORY." In the first century this was done by the priests. This is holy, true, and proper worship. "True" is often translated differently: it's saying that truth is inseparable. Russ is a computer program, which is his identity. You can't separate him from what he does. This verse is saying you and

being a living sacrifice are inseparable: wherever you go, you refuse to narrate your life with yourself at the center.

Don't get dressed in the latest style, don't conform to the latest style. If you were born in the 70s, stick with bell bottoms. Don't shift your identity to the culture's expectations. We are called to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Transformed means "metamorphosis." We need to do this because it's so easy to lose sight of our identity and so easy to take on negative identities.

If you were to go back to Eden, before Satan there was ONE Voice who said creation and us were good. When Satan enters, he says who we are, who God is, and what should be done. We have to learn to listen to the one true Voice, not the one that says you need to change to fit the culture today.

When you understand your identity as a priest and a living sacrifice, not being tossed to and fro, then you will know what you're supposed to do. You begin with WHO you are, not what you should do.

### III. Healing Flows out to the World

Healing comes from the cross and transforms us inwardly; healing flows out of the cross. I want you to grab hold of *when* healing happens. For example, when someone is freed from an addiction, a new creation is announced. It's an announcement of what God is doing.

Healing as Participation in the New Creation:

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) -**

**"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"**

I Cor 5:17: You are going to war on Jesus's team and you are the flag person which identifies you as Christ. The new creation has come.

There is something that translators don't bring to light: You aren't just a new creation now, but it **happened** and **is happening** to you. The old is **gone** and **is going**: two realities. You have an identity change.

When my kids were conceived, they were Cepins. Even though they didn't know anything about Cepin

ethics, etc., they were Cepins and no one could take that away from them. This is the sanctification process. The old means you are learning to walk away from that old way. It's like being in Sweden and flying to Tucson still wearing your parka and wanting to ice fish. Those things are going away.

### Practical Applications

How does this work out practically?

We become people of reconciliation: we bring things that are wrong and make them right.

You aren't the things that you think define you: a teacher, a mom, a kid. Your primary job is THIS: a minister of reconciliation.

## Becoming Ministers of Reconciliation:

**2 Corinthians 5:18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the **message of reconciliation**. **20** We are therefore **Christ's ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him **we might become the righteousness of God**.

We are called to speak reconciliation to each other!

### Practical step #1: Announce your identity

The next time I ask you what you do, I dare you to say, "I'm a minister of reconciliation, I'm an ambassador" and you can use this verse above. You can try this at a restaurant, or any time someone asks you what you do.

The process is that we are healed through the death and resurrection of Jesus. But this still isn't practical.

### Practical step #2: Gently restore

Community and  
Healing

**Gal 6:1** Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. **2** Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.



This picture represents farming: this person has picked up a rock in the middle of a field as they are working but they can't move it very well. You walk by (the picture of community) and see them struggling (with sin) and you and I restore them gently.

Here is how not to restore gently:

- "You are a stupid person" and then the rock falls on them and they die.
- Ask them a bunch of questions
- Everyone tries to carry the rock (but can't)

**GENTLE PROCESS:** How to help someone to get out from under a rock: you have to bend well, following the instructions on how to lift something. Community is carrying one another's burdens. We are a community, not individuals.

### Practical step #3: Consider how to spur another on

We have weaknesses and are susceptible to sin and we need each other's help. It looks like this:



**“Let us consider”** is often overlooked: this process gets enacted when we consider one another, either on a Sunday or during the week. We often talk and think about ourselves, not each other. This is an invitation for us to think about each other.

Like the leper colony, we see a person trying to feed themselves with one arm and we can either walk by them or we could consider their challenges and how to help them.

Spurs: Not like a spur today. It's more like poking repetitively with sharp (or any) objects. Irritation with a feather would work, too. The purpose is so they will move toward love and good deeds. There is intention in what you do in that it drives a person toward love.

You carry the burden, you get involved in things, with the hope that faith and belief would result. This means moving you towards the cross of Jesus (if I'm intentional). This is also a great parenting verse.

To irritate someone, better to be curious rather than confrontive:

Rather than “don't do that!” you could say “I notice that when this happens, you do >>>>>.”

### Practical step #4 Show up

This is effective WHEN YOU SHOW UP. I won't know what you're struggling with or your joys if you don't show up. I also can't encourage you, give you courage. Paul says it's easy to get out of the habit of showing up .

The Paralytic Man - Luke 5:17-26  
20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

I know what the friends of this guy wanted: they wanted to run and work with him again. They wanted to get him to Jesus no matter what it takes. It's not my faith that does this, it's our faith together.

Luke 5:22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23 Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? 24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. 26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

Jesus does something that was somewhat irritating, “friend your sins are forgiven” What does being forgiven have to do with walking? First, the man needs a new identity which will transform him and the people around him.

The Pharisees got upset with him.

Jesus does both: he forgives and he heals the man.

When people have a baby, they have a baby shower to celebrate the new person, the new creation.

When I move from being a liar to telling the truth, you should celebrate! When we sing happy birthday, we are celebrating another year of maturity.

The belonging service is a way to renew and celebrate this as well. Jesus did not get leprosy, HE was the contagious one. Now, WE are the contagious ones who can offer this healing to others.

I am an image bearer created by God to do good things; I have good things to offer and no one can take these away from me.” This is what Patti Cepin says whenever she has to do something she is uncomfortable with, even at age 82.