

## Sunday 6

Today's Gospel presents our Lord to us as one who can heal the sick. This is of course the way in which the Gospels often present him to us. The Lord could and did heal people, and that is why the crowds gathered around him. Can you imagine how full this church would be if word got out that the priest here could heal people! After all, the great curse of life is sickness. No one wants to be sick, and all the wealth in the world cannot make up for a lack of good health. Health is necessary to enjoy life.

But the Gospels warn us against seeing Jesus simply as a miracle worker. They want us to see his power to heal within the context of his message which is that the Kingdom of God is coming. The miracles are just one way in which the Kingdom's coming expresses itself. Sickness in the Lord's time was seen as either a punishment for sin or a possession by the devil. Thus its removal was seen to be a sign of the power of the Kingdom of God now present and active in people's lives. But that was a hard lesson for the people of Jesus' time to learn, and it is just as hard for us today. They—and we—are more concerned about our health here and now, and the Kingdom can take care of itself.

Our desire for good health is a natural desire and a good desire, but we have to place it within the context of our Christian faith, and that is the belief in a resurrection. Hard as it is to understand or even imagine what the resurrection is, our faith insists that Jesus was raised from the death, and that what happened to him will happen to us. Therefore, for us death is a door, not an end, and this belief ought to influence how we look upon our health. Life here is not the ultimate good, the ultimate goal. No, life after death is that for us.

When someone is young but sick, it seems to me that every means should be used to restore that young person to health. But it is not the same when we are old. A woman recently told me that she has survived another hip operation quite well. She is in her seventies. Replaced hips are thought to have a life-span of about 12 years before they have to be replaced again. This lady said to me that she doubts that she will put herself through another hip replacement when she will be in her late eighties.

To see very old people all hooked up in the hospital is not a very pretty sight. The question arises: Why this pain, this effort? How many years will it add to their lives? And what kind of years will they be? And how active here is the belief that death for us

Christians is not an end but a beginning. Might it not be better to forego such care when we are very old? Why not accept our deaths and die with dignity at home with our families? Such are my thoughts? What do you think?