

# The Park Road Pulpit

*Sermons from Park Road Baptist Church*

Russ and Amy Jacks Dean, Pastors

**Planting Dreams Where Wounds Leave Scars**

**Mark 8.22-26**

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**Amy Jacks Dean**



It was my freshman year of college. I had looked forward to this for so long. I had wanted desperately to go to Clemson University. I had wanted so very much to be “on my own” (which I don’t really know how you can call your freshman year of college “on your own” when Daddy was still footing the bill and calling the shots – but it made sense at the time!). I couldn’t wait and somehow the fact that my blood runneth orange seemed to override the fact that I was just a simple, small town girl. As I recall it – 20 years ago this fall – it took less than one week for me to realize that I was in over my head. Clemson was too big. There were too many people. And though I would have never admitted it at the time – I was homesick. Having been the captain of my high school tennis team and the good Christian girl that I was, it was only natural that I had been the president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at my small town high school. So after a week or so of misery at Clemson, I mustered the courage to attend the Clemson chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The group was relatively small at the time – maybe 60-100 students – and they met every Thursday night at 9:19 pm in Mauldin Hall in the lobby of the football dorm. I instantly found my home there. The people were nice. They sang great songs. A speaker always seemed to talk about exactly what I needed to hear. And it didn’t hurt that the president of Clemson’s FCA was a really cute Clemson football player. I thought I might survive after finding this small group of fish in this very large sea of people. Until the middle of the spring semester. It was a regular FCA meeting

until the prayer time. And during the prayer time, Glen – the FCA president - began praying for the person in the room that he sensed had a severe headache; and then the person who he believed was beginning to come down with the flu; and then the person that he could feel in the room whose grandparent was not doing well. And before I knew what was happening, folks were coming forward and the cute football player FCA president was laying hands on these people and students from around the room encircled these folks and began praying and chanting for the headache to be healed and for the flu to be healed and for the grandparent to be healed. And I vividly remember my head beginning to spin as I felt completely out of sync and out of place. I was attending my first healing service, and I didn't know what to think about it. It upset me terribly. As I look back on it, I can't believe I actually had the nerve the next day to call the president and ask to meet with him. We discussed what had happened, and he pulled out his Bible and showed me verse after verse of healing narratives to prove that this was Biblical activity. I never went back to another Clemson FCA meeting after that. I could see that the direction in which that group was headed was not the direction I wanted to travel. And it was a great loss to me.

Why was I so uncomfortable with something that is so Biblical? Jesus was a healer – he was known for it far and wide – though he frequently warned folks not to tell anyone about some of his miraculous feats. He knew that if word spread people would be distracted by the healing and miss the point of his being. One thing is for sure: healing was controversial then and it is controversial now. How can something so needed and so wanted be so controversial? There are many who take the healing stories in the Bible very literally and find great comfort in them. There are folks who participate in healing

services today – I’m guessing some of you have – and you know and believe in the power of God at work in the world. There are others who throw the accounts of healing in the Bible out of their canon – believing that this kind of supernatural occurrence doesn’t really happen and chalk all of these healing stories up to magical thinking. And those folks find themselves like me my freshman year of college – unnerved by the calling out of individuals and laying hands on them so that they might Be Healed.

For today, I want to take this approach with this healing story: I want to leave the story be and just let it speak for itself without the distractions of whether it really happened or not, or if healing services and the laying on of hands really works today. Let’s save that discussion for a time when we can really discuss – like a Wednesday night or a Sunday School class. I want us to decide that we will not let our minds wander instantly to the roving evangelists we’ve all seen mocked in movies screaming out – “Be Healed” – and the person who has been wheelchair bound for 20 years instantly gets up and walks. For today, I want us to let this one biblical account stand on its own. However you view the healing power of Jesus, there is truth to be found here, and I don’t want to miss the Truth because of the telling.

So . . . . there’s this blind man who has been brought to Jesus by some people. The people begged Jesus to heal him. As many times as I’ve read this story, I’ve just noticed this. The man doesn’t seek Jesus – “some people” – doesn’t even say “friends – just “some people” bring the blind man to Jesus. And they begged Jesus to touch him – heal him. So Jesus takes him by the hand and leads him away from the village – doesn’t even ask the man what he wants or needs, and there’s no indication that anyone goes with them. Jesus spits in his hands and touches him. And says – can you see anything?

“Walking trees,” the sort of blind/sort of sighted man says. He regains his vision, but not completely – it’s all still a little blurry. The guy goes from blindness to sight, but not quite. Instead of seeing individual people – they look more like trees walking around. This is bizarre – isn’t it? Surely Jesus could do better than this. And then the text says that Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again and he looked intently. I believe he laid his hands on his eyes and then cupped the man’s face in his hands and the power of love healed that blind man so that he could recognize Jesus for who he really was. Lots of sermon titles that could come from this text: “2<sup>nd</sup> Time’s a Charm with Jesus” or “Good News for Us: Even Jesus Doesn’t Always Get It Right the First Time.” Is this a passage about Jesus’ healing ability or about people who go to great lengths to find help for others or about the power of touch to the healing process. I think this passage tells us something about the nature of Jesus – that he was seen as someone who had the power to heal. And if he had that power and he told his disciples that those who follow him would do the works that he did and even greater works (John 14) – then what does that say about our own power to heal?

It’s been interesting to have Jesus as Healer as our theme today on All Saints’ Sunday. How many people in your life have died in spite of your desires and prayers that they be healed? How many of you bargained with God for healing? How many of you wept and pleaded with God – God, do something, anything – just let Bobby be ok, just let Susie live, just let John make it? I know I have felt that intensity in my own life. And the truth is that in the situations of my own story, the healings didn’t come the way that I wanted and needed. But if we only allow healing to be defined as living, then we will all be disappointed – for dying will come to us all. And if we only allow healing to be

associated with no disease or injury or disability, then we will all be disillusioned because disease and injury and disability abound in our world – in our church even. But there is no doubt that we all need to Be Healed, and I believe there is no doubt that we all hold the power to follow in the footsteps of Jesus to become a healing force in this world.

Healing often looks like a casserole or a foot massage. Healing often sounds like music or laughter. Healing often takes place when we keep watch – sitting in silence and being present. Healing often comes in tears of compassion. Healing often comes at the hands of doctors and nurses. Healing comes when a grandmother crawls up into a hospital crib to comfort her sick granddaughter. Sometimes healing starts and it looks a lot like trees walking around – it’s blurry and unnerving and a bit uncomfortable and unknown – but it’s a step forward nonetheless. And I do believe that the only real healing that comes is *when dreams are planted where wounds leave scars*. What are the scars in your own life? The broken places of our lives usually become our strongest places. The pain remains and while the scar may fade some with time – the scar remains as a reminder of the pain and loss. But what would it look like to plant dreams in the wounds of our lives?

I have tried to do that in my own support of Juvenile Diabetes – hoping and praying that one day there will be a cure. I have tried to plant dreams in the scarred places of my life in support of the Ronald McDonald House as they house families who have children in the hospital. I have tried to plant dreams in the ways that I am present and keep watch. I have tried to do that in telling stories and remembering well what I’ve been taught since my childhood and passing that on to my own children. How many times a week do I catch myself saying “You know what Pop always said . . . .” (Most of his best

lessons aren't repeatable here, but they still hold much truth!) I have tried to plant dreams in the wounds of my own life with laughter. And it has often been the tears that have watered the dreams – for it does seem that these kinds of dreams need the healing salty water of our very own tears so that healing might finally come.

John Claypool, in writing about loss and grief and healing tells this story: A 5 year old boy started kindergarten and the teacher asked the class if they would like to make a Christmas present for their parents. The little boy thought this was a grand idea. His dad smoked a pipe and he wanted to make him an ashtray. So the teacher got some clay and together they molded the clay to form an ashtray, and the boy painted it blue – his father's favorite color. The day for the Christmas pageant came and after the program, the boy ran to his classroom to get the carefully wrapped package for his father. As he ran back down the hall – waving goodbye to his teacher and friends – the boy slipped and dropped the gift and the ashtray shattered into pieces. “When he realized that all the work of the fall and all his hopes for Christmas morning were dashed, the child began to cry as if his heart would break.” The father was uncomfortable with the sight of his son crying and in his feeble effort to make things better, he said to the boy, “Don't cry, son, don't cry. It doesn't make any difference.” But the mother who was much wiser came right up behind them and said, “You are completely wrong. Of course it matters!” And with that, she swept up the weeping child in her arms and began to weep with him the tears that are utterly appropriate when a precious thing in life has been broken. She got a tissue and wiped the boy's tears and with the same tissue she wiped her own and said, “Come on, son, let's pick up the pieces and take them home and see what we can make of what is left.” (story taken from John Claypool's book Mending the Heart, pages 40-42)

This All Saints' Sunday is a reminder that we pick up the pieces and see what we can make of what is left. We plant dreams where wounds leave scars, and sometimes through our tears people may look like walking trees, but Jesus' healing touch still holds our face in his hands. And it is enough. May it be so.

### Pastoral Prayer

God with us,  
we have gathered with a sense  
of the sacredness of this space,  
aware of your presence flowing from one person to another.  
We come with our wounds wide open,  
with our defenses down,  
wearing our personal needs like placards,  
calling to you as did so many who approached Jesus,  
saying, "Heal me, help me, touch me!"  
We work hard at being happy,  
at coping, at surviving, at holding on,  
but we have come here hoping to let go  
and to open ourselves to Christ's healing flow.  
Touch our lives, our God, as we worship here today,  
and cast your sunlight through our tears till rainbows rise,  
and plant dreams where wounds leave scars  
like furrows in broken ground,  
rekindling our hope,  
reviving our strength,  
refreshing our faith.  
Amen.

John W. Howell (taken from Touch Holiness, page 181)