

There are many different sides to Jesus. And probably most of us think of Jesus as a *wise teacher*, or the *suffering servant who dies on a cross*, or the one who was *resurrected* to new life. But there is another side to Jesus that perhaps we don't think about as much and that is Jesus the *healer*. About a *third* or more of the stories in the gospels are about Jesus the healer—so this is not something incidental. There are stories of Jesus healing all kinds of illnesses and disabilities: blindness, deafness, paralysis, lameness, leprosy, chronic bleeding, fever, mental illness, and many other unnamed healings. There are even three stories where Jesus healed people from death—a mother's son, a father's daughter, and Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary.

Maybe we don't tend to focus on Jesus the healer as much because of the rise of modern medicine. If we are sick then we go to a doctor and if we need some religion then we go to church. We tend to split these things up now. Well, a lot of people do but still not everybody. Many people believe in *spiritual* healing of *physical* illnesses. And even people who rely mostly on modern medicine can recognize that there is still much that is unknown and mysterious about healing. In our lifetimes we can realize that there is much more attention given to things like the mind-body connection, meditation, homeopathy, acupuncture, yoga, walking, and even kindness as gateways to healing. And stories of inexplicable healings still keep arising. But healing from death? That's pretty extreme. And yet even there there are still stories that keep arising of inexplicable near-death experiences.

So when you really think about it, what may at first seem arcane and alien about Jesus the healer, isn't so entirely arcane at all. So I think it is best to keep an open mind. At least, my sense of life as I get older is that I understand even less than I thought I did before. Life is just way stranger than I used to think.

Having said all that, as challenging as the story of Lazarus is in terms of his being raised from the dead by Jesus, I realize it is something else that really trips me up. In the other gospel books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke where there are all kinds of stories of Jesus the healer, the sense you get from those stories is that Jesus healed people out of an abundance of compassion. People were suffering and Jesus responded. He didn't mess around with that—he did something.

But in the Gospel of John, when Jesus heals it doesn't seem to be coming from compassion so much as from some other perspective that is hard to name. The way it is referred to in today's story is by saying that the healing—the raising of Lazarus--will be such that the *glory of God* would be revealed.

*So just what was revealed?* In the full story of which we have an excerpt here, *what was revealed was* that Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, were grieved and very vexed that Jesus had not come sooner to spare Lazarus this death. And *what was revealed was* that their neighbors wondered the same thing, as they said: "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" And *what was revealed was* Lazarus being healed from his death—and yet not being *resurrected* that meant that Lazarus would still face death again someday.

So what is revealed in this story is much more complex than a sheer victory. Jesus' absence and his presence, the grief and the joy, the loss and the life restored--are all woven together. There was neither one without the other—there is no either/or.

And so we can have *wonderful* things—even miraculous things happen to us. And *still we are merely mortal*.

*Miracles do not contradict mortality. But neither does our mortality contradict miracles. Life is stranger than just one...or the other.*

*The glory of God is that it is all somehow woven together.* And I cannot pretend to understand that at all.

But Lazarus sure did.