



JESUS, OUR HEALER

By Rev. Will Nelken

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As a local church, we are On the Road to Easter together—28 days of spiritual insights from the Gospel of Matthew (the first book of the New Testament). Last Sunday, as we began this journey, we reviewed the genealogy of Jesus in chapter one, and learned something more about the grace of God that takes us just as we are and draws us into His kingdom's purpose.

Through this week, we have read of Jesus' unusual birth, His baptism in water, His testing in the wilderness, the beginning of His public ministry, His first disciples, and His most famous sermon.

Today, we began to read about Jesus performing miracles of physical healing. In fact, before the end of this chapter, we learn that on one occasion, *"He healed all the sick"* who were brought to Him. Astonishing!

Today, from Matthew, chapter eight, I want to share three vital truths about Jesus Christ and His power to heal miraculously. See if you recognize the first truth in this passage:

A Jew with Leprosy

Matthew 8:1 Large crowds followed Jesus as He came down the mountainside. ² Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached Him and knelt before Him. "Lord," the man said, "if You are willing, You can heal me and make me clean."

³ Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," He said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared. ⁴ Then Jesus said to him, "Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed."

Several wonderful things are revealed in this passage:

Touching a Leper

According to Jewish custom, people with leprosy were forbidden to associate with others. When a leper came near other people, he was to warn them by crying out, "Unclean! Unclean!" *Why?* Because Jews were forbidden to have any contact with a leper; contact of any

kind would render them ceremonially unclean and prevent them from participating in the rituals of worship. And there was no small concern that leprosy was contagious!

This leper gave no such warning, but he approached Jesus and knelt at His feet. Yet, Jesus did not draw back, but instead, reached out and touched him and healed him instantly! What could move Him to such a degree that He was willing to transgress religious tradition publicly?

Social Media

After receiving such a miracle, I suppose the natural inclination would be to run to your family and closest friends to share the good news. We might call that “private sharing,” because of the limited number of people that would hear of it—just one’s friends.

But Jesus urged him to pass up that opportunity for something potentially far more productive: reporting the miracles to the priests, with the appropriate sacrifice of thanksgiving, according to the Law of Moses. That would bolster Jesus’ claim that He had not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. And it would broadcast the news to the “public” through the network of the priests and their conferences and schools.

I Am Willing

Most wonderful of all, is the revelation of the heart of Christ toward this individual’s desperate condition.

The leper trusted that God was able, but was uncertain of His willingness: “*Lord, if You are willing, You can heal me and make me clean.*” He said it the way all of us have said it at one time or another, “Lord, I know You *can* help me, if only You *want* to.” It’s a natural uncertainty. I’m not God, and I don’t know everything that God knows. I want Him to, but I’m not sure if He wants to.

Some will tell you that to assert that you know what God wants in any particular situation is arrogant. They say that the humble plea should *always* leave room for God to have a different idea: “If it is Your will.”

Others will tell you that if you suggest in any way that it might *not* be His will, that you are unbelieving, and will get nothing from the Lord.

It’s a quandary! I don’t want to be unbelieving, but I also don’t want to be arrogant. Please listen carefully to the next thing I say: the best response is the *honest* response. Don’t tell God what you think He wants to hear you say; tell Him what is true. If He corrects you, accept it and grow by it. But don’t fake it!

What is the heart of God in such a situation? Here's what I love! Jesus did not scold the leper; clearly He was not bothered by the man's uncertainty. On the contrary, His compassionate love overflowed toward this man! He reached out and put His hand on him! He touched him and said, *"I am willing. Be healed!"*

What has this passage revealed to us about Jesus' power to heal?

- That it is more powerful than leprosy.
- That it can work instantaneously.
- That He works through a word and a touch.
- Most of all, that HE IS WILLING TO SHARE IT!

The next passage is equally as rich!

A Roman Officer

Matthew 8:5 When Jesus returned to Capernaum, a Roman officer came and pleaded with Him, ⁶ *"Lord, my young servant lies in bed, paralyzed and in terrible pain."*

⁷ *Jesus said, "I will come and heal him."*

⁸ *But the officer said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have You come into my home. Just say the word from where You are, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. And if I say to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it."*

¹⁰ *When Jesus heard this, He was amazed. Turning to those who were following Him, He said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel! ¹¹ And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. ¹² But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

¹³ *Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, "Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened." And the young servant was healed that same hour.*

Jesus' compassion was flowing like a river! Not even a Jew, but an officer of Rome—a Gentile—presented his plea for his young servant who was suffering with painful paralysis. Again, ignoring Jewish tradition, Jesus did not hesitate, but said, *"I will come and heal him."* He is so ready to help and to heal!

But the officer balked. In humility, he explained, *"Lord, I am not worthy to have You come into my home."* With confidence he urged, *"Just say the word from where You are."* Such complete and simple faith! Even Jesus was amazed!

The officer described the logic that informed his faith in Jesus:

“I am one who is under authority, and who also wields authority. When my superior says, ‘Come,’ I come. And when I tell my servant, ‘Go,’ he goes. That’s how our authority works. And I’m confident that Your authority will exhibit similar power. You needn’t come; just say the word, just express what You want.”

This was a God-moment! Jesus was so impressed, that He turned it into a teaching moment. *He said, “I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel!”* No Jew—for whom God had worked mighty miracles, to whom God had given His Law, and to whom He sent the prophets—no Jew had expressed such simple, clear faith in Jesus’ authority. In fact, many Jewish leaders denied it.

This was a prophetic-moment! It confirmed God’s ultimate plan through the Gospel: to extend God’s blessing to all the world (*including* the Gentiles). And it confirmed the loss, due to hard-hearted apostasy, of many for whom God’s Kingdom had been prepared. Blessing and cursing were on their way.

Because the Roman officer trusted Christ to act with authority, and as evidence of that divine authority, Jesus spoke, and the miracle happened—the servant was healed at that very time.

If you’ve ever wondered if Jesus *can* heal miraculously—whether He really has the authority to do so—here’s your answer! When He says, “Cancer, go,” it goes. When He says, “Leg, be healed,” it heals. He has the authority.

What more has this passage revealed to us about Jesus’ power to heal?

- That it is not bound by religious traditions.
- That it has superior AUTHORITY!

Matthew has one more truth to share with us.

Peter’s Mother-in-Law

Matthew 8:14 When Jesus arrived at Peter’s house, Peter’s mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. ¹⁵ But when Jesus touched her hand, the fever left her. Then she got up and prepared a meal for Him.

¹⁶ That evening many demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and He healed all the sick. ¹⁷ This fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, who said, “He took our sicknesses and removed our diseases.”

Peter’s mother-in-law was very sick. The word translated here as “in bed” literally means “thrown down.” So severe was her illness, that she collapsed in her bed and could not lift herself up.

In Luke's record of this incident, he reported that "everyone begged" Jesus to heal Peter's mother-in-law. Matthew completely omitted that appeal; for him, what was more significant, was that Jesus saw the need for Himself and responded out of His own compassion.

In this case, there was no expression of faith at all. But Jesus was in the room. Luke said that Jesus "rebuked the fever," but Matthew only noted that He "*touched her hand*" and she was healed at once. Completely.

Jesus spent the remainder of the evening surrounded by demon-possessed and sick people. With a willing heart, and using the authority His Father had given Him, He cleansed and healed them all, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah: "*He took our sicknesses and removed our diseases.*"

What more has been revealed to us about Jesus' power to heal?

- That it operates from His great compassion

Let us know clearly these three things today:

- (1) Jesus Christ is willing to heal the sick who come to Him, and
- (2) Jesus has divine authority to heal human sicknesses. Furthermore,
- (3) He has compassion and power to do so miraculously.

Disappointing Encounters

However, one of the disappointing things we may encounter in following Jesus Christ is that He doesn't ALWAYS perform miracles of healing. And when the way He works doesn't agree with what we hope and pray for, a variety of feelings may arise—disappointment, embarrassment, confusion, discouragement, fear, or anger.

Some have gone so far as to suggest that God ALWAYS wants to heal miraculously, even though there is no evidence of such one-sidedness in the Bible. There are some positive expressions of His ability and His willingness, as we have seen today, but there are many who have been left to deal with sickness (including Paul, Timothy, Trophimus, some who dismissed the value of the Lord's Supper, and the ensuing generations up to and including ours).

Christ may not work miraculously in a given situation, but that doesn't mean He is unwilling, uncaring, or unconcerned. If you have to choose between making someone you care about happy for the present moment or making them well for the long term, which choice would indicate the greater love? If you really care about someone, your care won't be limited to the immediate outcome; you will care about their welfare for the long term.

And so it is with God. His care for you has *eternal* weight and value. He truly cares about the long haul, and He will not sacrifice the long term for the immediate. Instead of complaining, we should be thanking Him for that!

Jesus Christ came to take our sicknesses and remove our diseases. Sometimes, individually; sometimes, collectively. Sometimes, miraculously; sometimes, medically.

How and when He chooses to heal you is not a statement about your value to Him. It is a feature of the outworking of His eternal Kingdom plan.

Whatever He chooses, and whenever, it will always be willingly, with authority and compassion. That is Jesus, our Healer.

Do you know Him today?

Do you believe He is willing to heal you?

Do you believe He has the right to heal you?

Do you believe He cares enough to heal you?

I don't know what your experience or education have told you... I don't know what your feelings or fears are telling you right now... But according to the Scriptures, we have every reason to expect that Jesus Christ will hear our prayers and heal the sick who come to Him for help.

Cause for Celebration

One day, Jesus was preaching in a house, where a crowd had gathered to hear Him—shoulder to shoulder, filling the doorways and the windows, until there was no room left for another person. But four friends had brought a man who was paralyzed, carrying him on a blanket. Finding no way into the house, they climbed up on the roof and tore up the tiles so they could lower their paralyzed friend into the house—right in front of Jesus.

Seeing their faith, Jesus said, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” A hush fell over the room, as religious leaders whispered to one another, “Blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Hearing their complaint, Jesus asked them, “Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Arise, pick up your blanket and walk’?”

To the natural mind, the answer is easily the first, because the transaction is invisible—no one can disprove it. If we say, “Arise,” then everyone will know, if it doesn't happen. But the crowd was silent, afraid to reveal their thoughts.

Jesus turned to the paralytic and said, “Arise, pick up your blanket and walk!” And he did just that, to everyone’s amazement!

More amazing than what they saw is what Jesus did that they could *not* see: He forgave the man’s sins! After all, a healed body will yet die. But a forgiven soul will live forever! Which is the greater miracle?

And that is what Jesus wanted to prove that day—that the greater healing, the eternal healing, is the healing of the heart and soul. Jesus Christ has power to do both, but we should never be confused about which is greater. “Rejoice that your names are written in the Book of Life.”

Have you put your trust in Jesus, for time and eternity? Remember, this life is a prelude to the next; it’s not the final act.

If you are disappointed that you have not received a miraculous healing in your body, rejoice that your name is recorded in Heaven!

If you receive a miracle of healing in your body, rejoice even more (!) that your name is recorded in Heaven.

Jesus Christ is our Healer. When this life is over, both body and soul will be made new, forever.

Heal us, Lord, inside and out, that we may live this life continuously for Your glory.