



***Jesus and Healing***  
**Matthew 8:1-17**

Let me invite your attention to Matthew chapter 8 this morning. Two weeks ago, we finished chapter 7, which means we finished the Sermon on the Mount. And so we step into a new section today, and we are going to try to cover verses 1 through 17 this morning.

This passage covers really three different scenes of ministry all taking place near and in the city of Capernaum.

If you remember the very end of chapter 7, Matthew gives us a conclusion to the crowd's response to the Sermon on the Mount, and he says...

**Matthew 7:28-29**

**28** And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, **29** for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

So, through the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus demonstrated his authority through his teaching. Well, in the next section, Jesus will demonstrate his authority through healing.

In fact, through chapter 9, Matthew gives us a cycle where Jesus performs some kind of miracle, mainly healings, and then he teaches on discipleship. That is repeated three times in chapter 7 through 9.

This morning, we will look at the first three healings of that cycle and they are three scenes - different people involved, different needs, so they offer unique lessons in each, but in the end we will be able to find a theme that runs through these three healings - but it also gives us opportunity to ask some really important questions about Jesus and healing.

Questions like, What do we make of the healing ministry of Jesus? And even more pressing, Should we expect healing today because of the work of Jesus? This is a passage that many point to to argue that we should expect healing even today.

So, our passage this morning give us an opportunity to ask questions like those, and I will do my best to answer that question and we will see another glorious truth in these scenes...

### **JESUS HEALS A LEPER**

#### **Matthew 8:1-4**

**1** When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. **2** And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." **3** And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. **4** And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

So in this first healing scene, Jesus meets a leper. And leprosy was a terrible skin disease that, if you had it, would have incredibly difficult implications for life.

Leprosy was terrifying for everyone and was abhorred by the Jewish people. At least once, with Miriam in Numbers 12, leprosy was given by God as judgment for rebellion. In 2 Kings 5, the healing of leprosy is likened to raising the dead. Leprosy really was viewed as a death sentence.

Outlined in the law, there was instruction for the priests on how to examine what looked to be possible cases of leprosy, and if someone was determined to be a leper, they began a life of complete isolation.

#### **Leviticus 13:45-46**

**45** "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' **46** He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

So, again, leprosy was a terrible disease with terrible physical consequences, but it also brought with it immense social implications. Lepers were outcasts of society. But here, a man with leprosy comes to Jesus, kneels down and makes a desperate statement..."Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

Now, notice in that statement, what the leper is saying. He does not doubt Jesus' ability to heal him. He does question Jesus' willingness to heal him.

Again, he is an outcast. Presumably, he doesn't have many friends. He probably isn't a part of a Grace Group or book club. He's not invited to game night. He doesn't experience any willingness of others to help him.

So, his question is not whether Jesus has the ability to heal him. That's not the question. He's unsure if he is willing.

And Jesus does something unthinkable and unmissable. Instead of taking a step back, instead of merely speaking a word to him or over him at a safe distance, he reaches out and touches him.

We can only guess how long it has been since that leper felt any kind of human contact. And Jesus touches him. He touches the unclean and untouchable.

But because Jesus is who he is, Jesus is not defiled. Rather, the leper is purified. And this is important to catch, because the law states that a priest can pronounce someone unclean or clean. Here Jesus is not just pronouncing him clean, Jesus makes him clean.

Jesus is far greater than a mere priest. He has total and complete authority over sickness and disease.

And this act of purifying a leper foreshadows Christ's work on the cross. Because on the cross, Jesus takes on all of his people's impurities and makes them perfectly clean in the sight of God. This act of physical healing is an incredible picture of spiritual healing.

So we are reminded that even those deemed untouchable or unclean, whether that is a pronouncement from others or something you've pronounced on yourself, no one is untouchable for Jesus. By his grace, he reaches out his hand and makes the repentant believer clean regardless of their past or current condition.

## **CENTURION**

### **Matthew 8:5-13**

**5** When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, **6** "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." **7** And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." **8** But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. **9** For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." **10** When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. **11** I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, **12** while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer

darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” **13** And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.

So, in this second scene, Jesus is met by a Roman centurion. A centurion was a Roman soldier who had authority over 100 soldiers (“centurion,” think “century”). One historian described centurions as the “military backbone throughout the empire.”<sup>1</sup>

And his servant is in terrible misery. He is paralyzed. And this soldier wants to help him. So he goes to Jesus.

Jesus offers to go to his house to heal him, but in an incredible display of faith and humility, he says, no, don’t come into my home, because I am not worthy of that. I know that you can heal him and you can heal him whether you are near him or far. Just say the word.

In a display of his humanity, Jesus marvels at this statement and applauds this man’s faith. And he makes this incredibly shocking statement for those who would hear it. He says, no in Israel has shown me that kind of faith. Not the faithful Israelites, not the religious leaders, no one has the faith of this Gentile (non-Jewish) soldier.

In fact, he says, many will come from the east and the west to recline at table with Israel’s patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom, that is, those who are ethnically sons of Israel, will be thrown into outer darkness.

Jesus is referring to prophecies of a coming messianic feast. When the kingdom of God comes in fullness, when Christ returns, it is described as a rich feast for all those who are a part of the kingdom.

**Isaiah 25:6-9**

**6** On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. **7** And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. **8** He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. **9** It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

And we see this feast briefly mentioned in Revelation.

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, Expositor’s Commentary.

**Revelation 19:9**

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

And so when Christ returns and makes all things new, his kingdom consummated on earth, we, the people of the kingdom, will feast in celebration. The text doesn't specifically mention Chick-fil-a, but I'm hopeful...

And Jesus says, this centurion, this Roman soldier, will be there. He would be just one of numerous Gentiles from all over the world to pull a chair up to the table and enjoy the feast of the kingdom.

This theme of Gentile inclusion is all over the Bible, from beginning to end, and certainly major theme in Matthew's gospel, which ends with the Great Commission...

**Matthew 28:18-20**

**18** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So we are reminded through this healing the diverse nature of the kingdom. People from every tribe, nation, and tongue will make up the people of God.

**PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW****Matthew 8:14-15**

**14** And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. **15** He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him.

Fever for most of history was serious, so Peter's mother-in-law is sick and has a high fever, but Jesus heals and she gets up and immediately serves Jesus.

And this very quick account of healing simply reminds us that the appropriate expression of gratitude is shown in service. How else should we respond to the one who has redeemed us but with a heart of grateful service to him?

So, chapter 8 begins with these three healings, one with a leper, one with a Gentile soldier, and one with Peter's mother-in-law. While each has their own lessons, we

shouldn't miss one big lesson with this group of three: These healings of Jesus uniquely demonstrate the compassion of Jesus.

In reality, all healings demonstrate the compassion of Jesus, but these three especially do so. Because we see Jesus' ministry here to those somehow living on the margins of society.

The leper was ritually impure and was an outcast from all social and religious functions.

The centurion had no religious status as a Gentile.

Peter's mother-in-law had no ethnic limitations, but her gender would have kept her from many privileges only available for males.

To think about this, consider the temple courts, the courts of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. A person could only go so far towards the inner courts. There were designated areas on the way limiting access. There was a Court of Gentiles, that is as close as Gentiles could go. There was a Court of Women, where Jewish women could enter but could go no further. And then the inner court was reserved for men of Israel.

Again, all three of these people in our passage this morning were limited in their ability to come near the inner parts of the temple, the leper furthest away outside not only the temple, but the community altogether. But Jesus came to them.

And so it is with the gospel. Though we were separated from God, not because of gender or ethnicity but because of our sin, something sure of every single person in history...Jesus comes to us. And now, by God's grace, ALL have access. ALL are welcome into the kingdom. ALL through their repentant faith become temples of the living God, whose Spirit indwells them.

So, don't miss in these accounts of healing that JESUS IS BOTH POWERFUL AND COMPASSIONATE.

And holding both of these truths up is very important because one without the other would not be comforting. To say we know that Jesus is powerful and authoritative, but unsure of whether Jesus is compassionate would produce comfort. Or on the other hand, to say we know Jesus is loving and compassionate, but we are unsure of his authority, we think it only goes so far, that too would not be comforting. Jesus would not be the glorious Savior that he is. But Jesus is both, powerful and compassionate. Able to bring salvation and healing, AND willing to bring salvation and healing. And he invites you to come to him. See your need for him and come to him by faith.

But there are two more verses in this passage we need to see...

### HEALING IN ATONEMENT?

#### **Matthew 8:16-17**

**16** That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. **17** This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”

So, word spreads about Jesus and naturally others start to come. They brought others to him that were in need. He casts out demons and heals the sick. But notice, Matthew quotes from Isaiah about Jesus.

He is quoting from Isaiah 53:4 and it is in the middle of a section of the prophet Isaiah about the coming Messiah, also described as the Suffering Servant. And it says that Jesus “took our illnesses and bore our diseases” but is referencing the atonement, the work of Jesus on the cross. Or what it is that is accomplished by Jesus’ death.

And this brings up some really important theological and practical questions.

Questions like, Did Jesus bear our physical illnesses on the cross? Did the atonement provide physical healing for us? If so, could we say that believers should expect and even demand physical healing now?

To be clear, there are teachers who say yer to all of those questions. They say that based primarily on this verse, that it is always God’s will to heal the sick. That Jesus’ death on the cross has provided our physical healing. So, if you aren’t healed, it isn’t because God didn’t will it, but because you don’t have enough faith. Healing is available; it is ours to either lay hold of in faith or ignore.

But is that true? Is that what Scripture is teaching? Again, this has massive implications for how we are to walk through sickness and walk with others who are experiencing serious physical suffering.

We need a broad, biblical-theological view of sickness and death to help answer those questions. Let me just make a couple of points to answer this...

1. Ultimately, all sickness, pain, disease, and death is a result of sin. All of it is a result of Adam’s fall. That doesn’t mean, of course, that every time we get sick, it is because of a specific sin we’ve committed. It does mean though that had Adam not sinned, had the fall not occurred, there would be no sickness, there would be no cancer, there would be no death.

2. Jesus' atoning death does, in fact, bring about redemption. Through his life, death, and resurrection, God in the gospel is reversing the effects of the curse, working to reconcile sinners back to him, but also to redeem all of creation.

But, in Isaiah 53, this verse that Matthew quotes here, uses a figure of speech, called "metonymy" in which the effect of something is used for shorthand of the cause. Sin's entrance into the world is the cause that has had numerous effects in the world, illness being one of them.

So, we could say, yes, Jesus bore our illness on the cross in the sense that he was punished for the sin that caused the sickness. Thus, through his first coming and his death he laid the foundation for the eventual defeat of all disease. All benefits of the redemption come from Christ's atonement.

The question, though, for us, very practically, is not *whether* our bodies will be healed, but *when*.

And Scripture points us to a future hope, when the saving benefits of Christ are known in their fullness...

#### **Romans 8:22-23**

**22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. **23** And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

#### **Revelation 21:1-5**

**1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." **5** And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Again, these are future realities. We have taste of them now because of Christ.. For example, we have fellowship with God because of what Christ has done, but we await the full experience of dwelling with God for eternity when he returns. We have the first fruits of Christ's saving benefits, but they are merely first fruits. There is much to come.



<sup>2</sup>Sam Storms writes, “It’s a serious mistake to think every blessing Christ secured through his redemptive suffering will be ours now in its consummate form. All such blessings shall indeed be ours. But let us not expect—far less demand—that we now experience the fullness of blessings God clearly reserved for heaven in the age to come (Rev. 7:15–17; 21:3–4).”

Now, does that mean we shouldn’t pray for healing or not expect God to miraculously heal before his return? Of course not. I know we have many in our church with real health struggles or you have someone close to you in need of healing, or you yourself is desperate for healing so, we certainly pray for healing. We know that God can and sometimes does miraculously heal, but it is important to understand that is far different than saying that Christ’s atonement secures all healing now and we need only to have enough faith.

We have to understand that the healing ministry of Jesus in the gospels is doing more than just bringing physical relief to those he ministers to. These healings are meant to provide evidence for the reality of God’s reign over all and be a taste of a future reality in the kingdom. When Matthew quotes Isaiah, he is saying, this is the one we’ve been waiting for! This is the Messiah!

And this Messiah, this King, has not come to merely protect us from physical death, but to reverse the reality of our spiritual deaths.

Again, because of sin we are more than spiritually sick, we are spiritually dead. But God in his love sent his Son to bear our sin on the cross, along with all the effects of sin, that we might have life. Jesus has come to reverse the devastating effects of the fall. And now by faith in Jesus we are purified, declared clean in God’s sight, and welcomed into the kingdom.

So, if you’ve never trusted in Christ, we implore you to do that today. Jesus is both powerful and compassionate, able and willing to redeem you.

## **CONFESSION & PRAYER**

Let’s spend a moment in silent prayer and confession...

### **PRAYER**

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<sup>2</sup> Sam Storms, “Does Matthew 8 Teach Physical Healing in the Atonement?,” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/physical-healing-atonement/>.

## **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

### **1 Peter 2:24**

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

### **VERSES**

Matthew 7:28-29

Matthew 8:1-4

Leviticus 13:45-46

Matthew 8:5-13

Isaiah 25:6-9

Revelation 19:9

Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew 8:14-15

Matthew 8:16-17

Romans 8:22-23

Revelation 21:1-5

1 Peter 2:24

### **SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Who might be considered modern-day “lepers?” How does Jesus change our thinking about them?
2. How should the global nature of the Church shape our view of the Church?
3. Do you agree that “the appropriate expression of gratitude is shown in service”? What would a lack of service communicate?
4. Have you ever heard that divine healing is dependent on your faith? How would you answer that?
5. Pray for any physical needs in the group and then pray for trust as you await God’s answer.