

## ***Changing Lepers' Spots and Melting Hearts of Stone***

Matthew 8:1-17 - NCBC, February 2, 2020

Main Point: **Jesus' supreme authority over disease proves He is our promised King.**

- Jesus heals a leper (1-4)
  - Cleansing by Jesus' compassion
  - Cleansing by Jesus' choice
  - Cleansing by Jesus' contact
- Jesus heals a centurion's servant (5-13)
  - His authority comes from God Himself
  - His authority comforts the humility of faith
  - His authority condemns the pride of religion
- Jesus heals a mom (14-17)
  - Recreating instant health
  - Renewing intimate worship
  - Removing influence of sin

Application: **Believe Jesus is King and able to deliver you from sin.**

- Every person is spiritually sick
- We all need a Savior
- Faith in Jesus' authority is required
- Our eternal home depends on it!

### **Opening Announcements:**

- **Welcome to our Boy Scouts** serving us this morning in honor of Scout's Sunday. We're blessed to serve as the charter organization for our local chapter, so we welcome our Scouts and their leaders, thanking them for their service in our community today!

- **Camp Nathanael Info Mtg next Sunday** at 2:30pm in the Commons. Learn more about joining our team on April 19-23 to share the Gospel with 100s of senior citizens in eastern Kentucky.

<<Glorious Christ>>

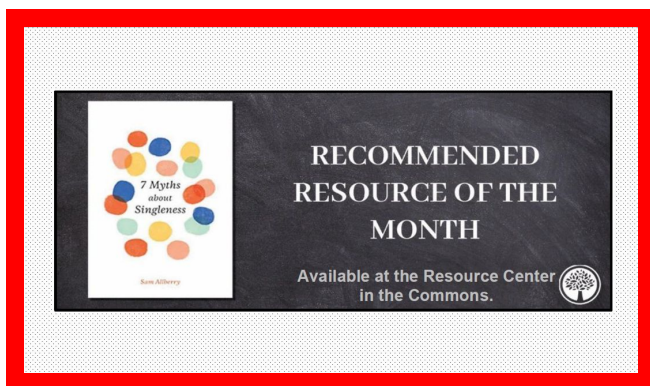


Jesus changes everything. His power is unequalled. So let's continue our participation in the global chorus of praise for Jesus by opening our copies of God's Word to **Matthew chapter 8.**



Today we return to our sermon series in **Matthew's gospel**, so if you do not have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand. It would be our joy to give you a copy of God's Word this morning.

Speaking of give-aways,



today we are recommending a new resource of the month. We are thankful for our Church Resource Center that exists to equip us with sound biblical resources in specific topics of interest.

Sometimes we are asked why we give away so many biblical resources free of charge? It the cost truly worth the investment? Well we glorify God every time we equip a Christian to better love God or love others. Our church resource center is an extension of this church's teaching ministry, and so as long as you truly read what you take, we want you to take whatever resources are available to help you grow deeper and reach farther for God's glory.

Last month we highlighted the book, *Something Needs to Change* by David Platt. It's a great book that complements our evangelism focus for 2020 together.

For February, we are recommending Sam Allbery's 7 *Myths about Singleness*. In our couple's world, we all need to think biblically about singleness. We highly recommend it, and you will find a pastor's review and copies in the Commons after this service.

| THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW                                     |  |  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| 1-3 Presentation of the King  |  |  |   |  |
| 4-7<br>Proclamation of the King<br><i>Sermon on the Mount (5-7)</i> | 8-10<br>Power of the King<br><i>Sending out the 12 Apostles (10)</i> | 11-13<br>Rejection of the King<br><i>Kingdom Parables (13)</i> | 14-20<br>Priorities of the King<br><i>Topsy-Turvy Values (18)</i> | 21-25<br>Progress of the King<br><i>Olivet Discourse (24-25)</i> |
| Kingdom offered to Israel   |  |  | Kingdom offered to all Nations                                    |  |
| 26-28 Passion & Proof of the King                                   |  |  |   |  |

Now today we return to our study of the Gospel of Matthew. Since it's been several weeks, let's quickly review what we've already learned.

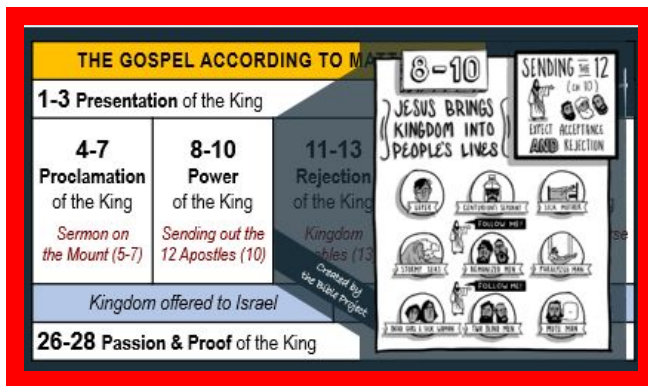
Remember **Matthew** is not written chronologically. Matthew arranges his gospel *topically* in order to clearly present Jesus as the Messianic King. This is why we've titled this sermon series, "Behold King Jesus!" Matthew's entire book is written to help Jews – religious people – see that Jesus is God's King who is bringing His kingdom to earth in fulfillment of God's promises.

In the first three chapters, Matthew presents Jesus as the son of King David and the son of Abraham. His humble birth fulfilled prophecy and even caused Gentile magi to come and worship Him. Matthew called him Immanuel – meaning *God with us*. And a voice from heaven

announces that Jesus is God’s beloved Son at His baptism!

Then in **chapter 4** Matthew Jesus overcomes all Satan’s temptations before beginning His public ministry in Galilee – the region of the Gentiles, preaching *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. **Chapters 4-7** really focus on the proclamation of the King as most of this first section contains His Sermon on the Mount.

We in fact see this pattern repeated in all 5 major divisions of Matthew’s gospel. Matthew organizes his presentation of Jesus as King around examples of Jesus’ works, and Jesus’ words. Works and Words. For it is the works and words of Jesus that argue most clearly for His kingdom authority as the long-awaited Messiah.



Therefore today we begin a new topical section in **chapter 8**. **Matthew 8-10** focus on the power of the King. We see the King’s powerful works in **chapters 8-9**, and the King’s powerful words in **chapter 10**. Here Jesus brings His kingdom power into people’s lives. In **chapters 8-9**, Matthew arranges 9 different miracles into three groups of three. (Today we will be focusing on the first three miracles found in **Matthew 8, 1-17**.)

But between each of these powerful triads, Jesus calls His disciples to *Follow Me!* This pattern helps us see that Matthew aims to convince us that Jesus is worthy of our submission. His power demands our worship and trust. These historical accounts are organized in such a way that we would *Behold Jesus as King*, and thereby experience the blessings of His kingdom rule in our lives.



So with that background, let’s read the Scripture before us today. Please stand in honor of the reading of God’s Word. From the English Standard Translation, I’ll begin reading from **Matthew chapter 7, verse 28**:

*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. 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.”*

*<sup>5</sup>When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, <sup>6</sup>“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” <sup>7</sup>And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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.” <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, <sup>12</sup>while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” <sup>13</sup>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.*

*<sup>14</sup>And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. <sup>15</sup>He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”*

This is God’s Word. Please be seated.

**Let’s Pray.**

Do you ever feel like a spiritual untouchable? Like you are never good enough for God? Like you never measure up?

Or perhaps, in this world of “haves” and “haves not,” it seems like you’re always finding yourself in the “has not” category? Like you always get the short-end of the stick for some reason?

Friends, if you resonate with any of these feelings of hopelessness or despair...today’s message is for you.

Today Matthew the tax-collector – a man who personally understands the stigma and loneliness of being a social outcast, confronts us with 3 powerful miracles of Jesus during His Galilean ministry.

Matthew wants us to see that,



Jesus' supreme authority over disease proves He is our promised King. There is no authority like Jesus' authority.

All three of these miracles focus on Jesus' power to heal

physical illnesses or diseases. So no matter what you are struggling with this morning... lift up your head. Come hear the good news. Take hope in the works and words of King Jesus. For He has wonder-working power available to or all who will trust Him today!

In **verses 1-4**,



Jesus heals a leper.

Look at **verse 1**,

*When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him.*

Jesus had just taught the Sermon on the Mount. Large crowds were around Him. But Jesus wasn't interested in gathering large fickle crowds. He was interested in individuals – especially those individual people who were hurting as the lowest of human society.

So *behold*, look at this - **verse 2** ...*A leper came to Jesus...*



Now please understand... this is a leper, not a leopard. This is a person with a deadly disease. A person with leprosy is called a leper.

Leprosy, or Hansen's disease today, was the most terrible of diseases in Bible times. Leprosy attacked your nerves, deadened all sensitivities, causing infection and degeneration of all your limbs, to the point where your body would become deformed, your limbs would fall off, and you would die. Lepers would smell like rotting flesh, their voices would become deep and raspy, and their faces could deform to look more like the face of a lion rather than that of a human being.

There was no cure for leprosy in Jesus' day, and it was extremely contagious. If you were diagnosed with leprosy, you were immediately put out of society while you waited for the disease to kill you. Lepers were literally the walking dead.

In fact, if a leper ever saw another person, they would have to cover their mouth, and cry as loud as they could, "unclean, unclean!" They were barred from towns. They could not worship with others. Jewish teaching forbade a Jew from coming closer than 6 feet to a leper, and if the wind was blowing, the limit was 150 feet.<sup>1</sup>

So put yourself in the place of a leper in Jesus' day. Besides the physical terrors of this disease, can you imagine the heart-wrenching pains of its loneliness?

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<sup>1</sup> Talmud, as quoted in John MacArthur's Commentary on Matthew  
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Unclean, unclean. I'm an untouchable. There's no hope for me. I'm lost, I'm dying, and I'm unclean. Stay away from me, lest you too be cursed.

Loved ones, leprosy is a good picture of our sinful condition, isn't it? We are all born sinners. **Ephesians 2** teaches us that we were dead in the trespasses and sin in which we once walked... every person living in this world has been diagnosed by God Himself with the curse of deadly sin. There's nothing we can do to save ourselves. We are the unclean. Spiritual untouchables.

But consider how Matthew pictures,



Cleansing by Jesus' compassion.

**Verse 2** says that this leper comes to Jesus...and instead of allowing His disciples to scold the leper or shoo him away... Jesus shows extravagant grace and compassion for this diseased man.<sup>2</sup>

And notice the leper's humility and faith,

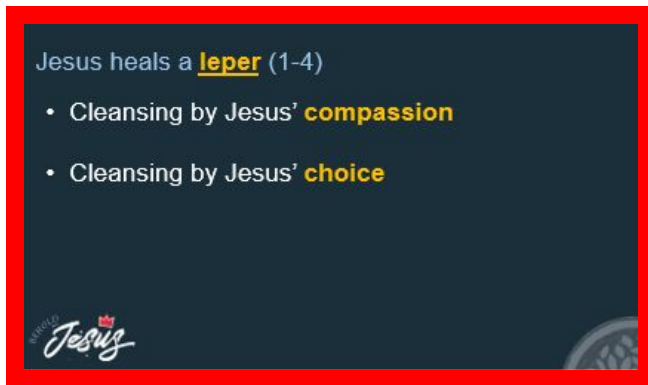
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<sup>2</sup> Mark 1:41

*He came to Jesus, and knelt before him, saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”*

I don't know how ugly his voice sounded. I don't know how badly this man smelled. I'm confident that a wide circle had formed around Jesus and this leper as the disciples and the crowds would have immediately distanced themselves from such a cursed man.

But the leper came to Jesus with humble dependence – believing that Jesus in fact had the power to heal the incurable! Notice, the leper didn't say, *If you can, you will make me clean*. No – the leper was already confident that Jesus possessed the sovereign power and ability to heal. This was just a matter of Jesus' choice.



The leper asks for **Cleansing by Jesus' choice**

You see, salvation is the gift of God. Only God can save. No amount of prayer or attending church, no amount of good works, can cleanse our incurable sinful condition. Our salvation is by God's doing, and God's grace alone.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John 6:63; 1 Peter 1:3ff  
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So the leper says from his humble kneeling position,

*Lord* – that means Sovereign Master, King – *if you will, you can make me clean!*

O friends, when you see how desperate your own condition...and when you experience the profound loneliness that comes from sin's alienation... may you join with the cursed leper...and coming kneeling before King Jesus, asking Him to miraculously cleanse your from your sinful condition!

For behold the extravagant grace of **verse 3**,

*Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him ...*

**Leviticus 5:3** forbade a Jew from touching a leper! If you touched a leper, you would become unclean yourself. But not Jesus who brings about,



**Cleansing by His personal contact.** Matthew's words emphasize his point:

*Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying I will; be clean!*

He touched me, O He touched me! *And immediately, his leprosy was cleansed!*

Can you see this man began to straighten his posture? His limbs extend again in full health? His open sores immediately close? His voice return to normal? The smell of death evaporate?!

O don't miss this!! When King Jesus personally identifies Himself with our sin, He doesn't become sinful; we become righteous!

If you and I wash our hands, and then touch something dirty, our hands become dirty. But not so with the extravagant grace of Jesus! Wherever Aslan's paws touch, there is life!!<sup>4</sup> Jesus personally identifies with our uncleanness to make us clean!

When the one who is perfectly righteous comes into contact with one who is ceremonially unclean... the unclean is made clean!!

So ...if Jesus can cure leprosy through His extravagant compassion, sovereign choice, and personal contact, so likewise He can forgive your sin!

He who never sinned himself, became sin on your behalf, so that you might become the righteousness of God through your personal identification with Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

And then notice **verse 4** where Jesus commands the leper to obey God's words. Because Divine cleansing always produces holy living. Jesus said the cleansed leper was to obey the law as a testimony, or a *proof to them*.

Jesus didn't come to abolish God's law. He came to fulfill it.<sup>6</sup> Jesus wasn't interested in gathering miracle-seeking crowds... so He told the cured man...just go and share your testimony with the priests, so they will know that I have the power to heal, and that God's kingdom power has come to His people.

Without a doubt, Jesus' supreme authority over leprosy proves He is our promised King!

Now let's observe the second miracle,

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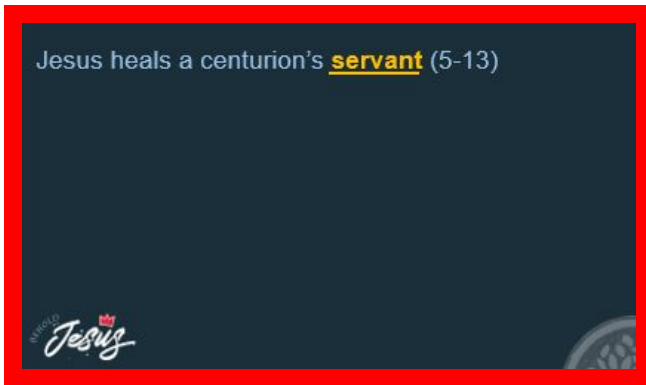
<sup>4</sup> Reference to C.S. Lewis' *Ej t qplergu"qllPctpk* where Jesus is pictured as a lion named Aslan.

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:17-19





where Jesus heals a centurion's servant.

In **verse 5** we meet a Roman centurion. This is a Gentile, a soldier in charge of 100 other Roman soldiers occupying Jewish territory.

By including this specific miracle Matthew shows how King Jesus responds to an outsider, a social outcast. A perceived enemy of God's people.

Now notice the centurion's attitude in **verse 6**:

*Lord*, - this is an unexpected address of worship, submission, and humility from a hardened military commander. This is not how you'd expect him to address a rabbi in his conquered territory. *Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.*

Here the hopeless sinful condition of mankind is pictured as a paralyzed servant boy who can do nothing to help himself in his horrific suffering. Even a powerful military commander can't do anything to give him relief.

The parallel account in **Luke 7<sup>7</sup>** tells us the centurion didn't even feel worthy enough to approach Jesus Himself, so he sent some Jewish elders to make the request on his behalf. He knew that Jews were prohibited from entering a Gentile's home. So he must have been shocked by the extravagant mercy of King Jesus' response in **verse 7**,

*I will come and heal him.*

You would think the centurion would be overjoyed at Jesus' offer to come and heal his servant. But look at his reply in **verse 8**,

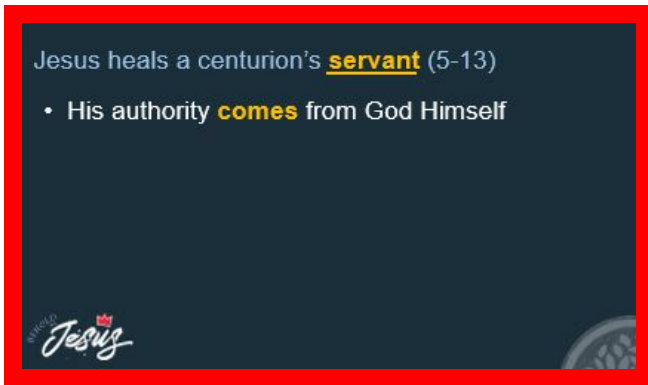
*Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.*

The centurion understood that his authority was delegated from the emperor of Rome. So when he spoke, things happened, because he spoke with the authority of Rome.

So then likewise, this Gentile centurion believed that,

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 7:1-10



Jesus' authority comes from God Himself

Just as Rome spoke when the centurion spoke, so likewise when Jesus spoke, God Himself spoke! So in humility and faith, this Gentile asks, Lord, will you just say the word, and my servant will be healed?



You see, Jesus' authority comforts the humility of faith.

This Gentile was so different than the proud, religious Jews. He believed Jesus is Lord. He did not count himself worthy to have Jesus come to his home. He

believed that Jesus possessed the very authority of God Himself!

And so Jesus says in **verse 10**, *Truly I tell you with no one in Israel have I found such faith.*

Now listen carefully to **verse 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.*

Translation: There will be many Gentiles feasting along with Abraham in the kingdom's banquet hall! I can't tell you how radical this must have sounded to the Jews around Jesus!! But then **verse 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.*

**Verse 12** just said very clearly that some religious Jews, "sons of the kingdom," will spend eternity in hell!



In other words, Jesus' authority condemns the pride of religion. There's only one way into kingdom welcome

around the heavenly banquet table. And that's humble faith in the Divine authority of Christ Himself. It doesn't matter whether you are a Gentile or a Jew. Your biology, your upbringing, your education, your physical appearance, your religious law-keeping... it's all for nothing, apart from humble faith in Jesus Christ.

Church – Jesus teaches more about hell than any other New Testament writer. There is a hell. It's described clearly in **verse 12** as a place of eternal darkness and torment. Hell is reserved for everyone who fails to recognize and submit to the authority of King Jesus.

But for every person who believes that Jesus is Lord, and submits to His authority, there's kingdom blessings graciously bestowed on them. And so Jesus says in **verse 13**, *Go, let it be done for you as you have believed.*

And by Jesus' word, from a distance, at that very moment, *the servant was healed.*

Do you believe that Jesus has the supreme authority of God Himself?

The third miracle comes in **verse 14** where,



### Jesus heals a mom

Now in **verse 14** we learn that Peter's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever.<sup>8</sup>

Remember, these were days before antibiotics or fever-reducers. A fever in biblical times would often lead to death. Jews were prohibited from touching anyone with a fever, out of fear of contracting the fever themselves. And besides, this was a woman.

Devout Jewish leaders would pray every morning, "Lord, I thank Thee that I was not born a slave, a Gentile, or a woman."<sup>9</sup>

But Jesus is bringing the kingdom and His kingdom blessings to all who will submit to His reign. No matter your race, or your social status, or your gender!

And so, at the disciples' encouragement,<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Incidentally, contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church, this proves Peter was married.

<sup>9</sup> MacArthur, *O c w j gy* 'Commentary

<sup>10</sup> Mark 1:30; Luke 4:38

*He touched her hand, and the fever left her...*



**Recreating instant health.**

Note the supreme authority of King Jesus over disease. This was not a gradual return to health. Extravagant grace transcends men's traditions, and as Christ personally identifies with her weakness, she is instantly made whole! And what does **verse 15** say next?

*And she rose and began to serve him.*



Jesus' healing didn't just recreate instant and complete health, His healing **renewed intimate worship**.

Just like Jordan Kauflin taught us last week, mercy always precedes worship. Worship is a whole-person response to the revelation of God Himself. And what extravagant mercy these miracles put on display as Jesus shows His supreme power over human disease.

In fact, **verse 16** shows us that after the Sabbath was over,<sup>11</sup> many who had spiritual problems of demon-possession or physical problems of sickness were brought to Jesus... and He healed them all – indiscriminately, without concern of their faith or their worthiness... as He was giving the Galilee of the Gentiles a taste of the kingdom blessings which come under His rule.

**Verse 17** summarizes all three of these miracles stating,

*This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.*

In other words, Matthew wants us to understand clearly the point behind Jesus' supreme power to heal diseases. And so he connects it to **Isaiah 53**, the prophecy about the Messiah's substitutionary atonement. The prophecy about the Messiah being wounded for our transgressions, and being crushed for our iniquities.<sup>12</sup>

Here's Matthew's point:

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<sup>11</sup> Mark 1:21-29; Luke 4:31-38

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 53:4-6



Jesus' healing of diseases is demonstrating how His kingdom reign **Removes all influence of sin.**

Of course diseases are not necessarily connected to a person's own sin. However, before sin entered the world, there was no such thing as death or disease. Disease and death are the result of sin and sin's influence on this world.

This is why Matthew connects Jesus' healing to Jesus' cross! Because Jesus' power to heal diseases shows He has the supreme power to deal with the underlying root cause of all death and disease.<sup>13</sup> Jesus has the power to overthrow sin and remove all of its influence in the human experience!!<sup>14</sup>

Therefore we must,

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<sup>13</sup> C.f. Matthew 9:5-6

<sup>14</sup> Revelation 21:1-4



**Believe Jesus is King and able to deliver us from sin.**

Yes, Jesus has the power to heal all physical diseases. And when we suffer physically in any way, it is good and right for us to pray just like the leper and the centurion... with humility, with faith, and with the understanding that God has the supreme power to heal according to His own sovereign will.

But remember Paul prayed to be healed from his thorn in the flesh three different times, and Jesus' didn't heal him, but instead said, *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect through your weakness.*<sup>15</sup>

So it is God's good and sovereign will which determines whether or not we receive physical healing on this earth. God doesn't heal based on how much faith we have. Faith never demands God to accomplish our will, but trusts that God's choice for us is best.

So whether physical healing comes to us here on this earth or not, we can rest assured that His supreme power

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<sup>15</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:9ff

to heal leprosy, paralysis, and fever gives absolute proof that He is able to deliver us from the root cause of sin itself.



So please let me be crystal clear. We must understand that **Every person here this morning is spiritually sick.** The Bible would say we have a terminal condition – we are dead in our rebellion and resistance to God’s authority. **We all need a Savior.** Every one of us. We need to be rescued from our contaminated condition of sin and its pending death. **Faith in Jesus’ authority is required.** There’s no hope for rescue in religion. You can’t decontaminate yourself by trying harder. You can’t ignore this problem and hope it goes away. You must believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that He has divine authority to deliver you from sin. **Your eternal home depends on it!** There is a dark hell, and there is a heavenly kingdom of glad feasting and joy.

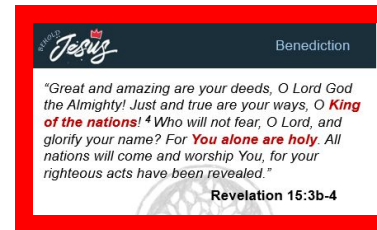


**Will you humbly submit today** to the One who has the power to change lepers’ spots, and melt hearts of stone?

**Let’s pray.**

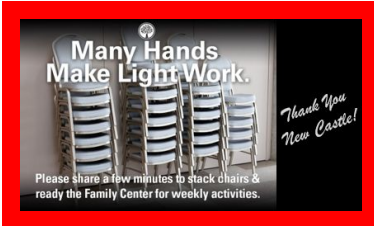
<<Jesus Paid It All>>

**Let’s pray our benediction together as we dismiss.**



*Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”*  
**Revelation 15:3b-4**





**After 2<sup>nd</sup> Service Only**

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**Recommended Resources on Changing Leper's Spots and Melting Hearts of Stone:**

- Leviticus 13:45-46; 14:1-32
- Numbers 5:1-4; 12:10
- 2 Kings 5:1-14
- Isaiah 53:4-5
- Mark 1:29-34, 40-45
- Luke 4:38-41; 5:12-16; 7:1-10
- 1 Peter 2:24
- Revelation 21:1-4
  
- [https://www.ligonier.org/learn/scripture/matthew\\_8/](https://www.ligonier.org/learn/scripture/matthew_8/)
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/healing-Bible.html>
  
- *Putting Jesus in His Place*, Bowman and Komoszewski
- *Defining Deception*, Hinn and Wood

**Growing Deeper:**  
**Life Group Questions**

1. Review Matthew 8:1-17. Jesus heals three unlikely characters in these verses. How might this impact those with whom you seek to share the gospel?
2. Read Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, and Luke 5:12-16. Discuss why Jesus commanded the cleansed to return to the community of faith (c.f. Matthew 5:17). Why would Jesus tell the healed man not to tell others?
3. Review Matthew 8:5-13. How does the centurion display humility and faith? Based on Jesus' rebuke in verse 12, what was the object of the Jews' faith? What was the object of the centurion's faith?
4. Review Matthew 8:14-15. Why does mercy always lead to worship? How have you experienced God's mercy in ways that motivated your praise or service of Christ?
5. Read Isaiah 53:4 and 1 Peter 2:24. Does Jesus' healing ministry guarantee the healing of those for whom we pray? Why or why not? Explain how Matthew 8 speaks against the false claims of the "health-and-wealth" prosperity gospel.