

Matthew 8:1-13 – “The Healing Power of Jesus”

Each Gospel writer was writing with a bit of a different perspective regarding Jesus. Just like 4 witnesses can see the same thing yet report very differently based on their perspective and emotional connection to the person or thing being observed.

Matthew is writing to reveal Jesus as the King. In Chapter 1 we saw the **pedigree** of the King as we looked at the lineage of Jesus and His qualifications to the throne. In Chapters 2-4 we saw the **person** who was the King as Jesus is confirmed as the King. In Chapters 5-7 we saw the **principles** of the King and His kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. Now as we move into chapter 8 we begin to look at the **power** of the King.

- This chapter reveals Jesus’ power over sickness (1-17), power over storms (23-27), and power over Satan (28-34).

1. Jesus Heals a Leper – 8:1-4

8:1 - *When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.*

Jesus has been up on the hillside above the Sea of Galilee preaching this amazing sermon. We read that the crowds were amazed and astonished at His teaching (7:28). They’re looking for more. So as Jesus comes down from the mountain, the crowds are following along.

8:2-3 - *And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”³ Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

As the multitudes follow, one breaks through – a leper! And how significant this is. It’s interesting that this is the first recorded miracle/healing in the New Testament (not the first chronologically, but the first we read of in the order of the New Testament).

This is of interest and significance because leprosy is seen as a picture of sin throughout Scripture.

Leprosy was a horrible disease then and now. A leper in this day was pretty much seen as the living dead, with no known cure. Leprosy caused rot in your body where fingers, toes, and other body parts would fall off. It was a stinky

disease, it alienated you from others to where a leper was forced to live in isolation.

It's such a fitting picture of sin. Leviticus 13 lays out the characteristics and commands for leprosy.

It showed us there that leprosy begins under the skin. It's something that begins from our core. We are born sinners.

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells” (Romans 7:18).

- In eighteenth century England, if you were convicted for stealing, the judge could order your hand to be cut off. If convicted again, you could have your other hand cut off. One such pickpocket had lost both his hands, but continued to get by in his field by picking pockets with his teeth. Nothing would have worked for this guy because the issue was sin that was deeper than the skin.
- Sin is not something we treat as though it were a minor surface problem or skin irritation. A leper couldn't just apply some lotion to make it better. Just like leprosy and just like sin, we need to get to the root of the problem. And that is we are sinners in need of a heart transplant. The world's method tries to work on the outside, ie. positive reinforcement, or blame the upbringing or environment. However, we need to look at what's going on inside. It's a sin issue that needs to be taken care of from the inside out. It's a work only God can do! We need spiritual surgery. A doctor needs to get inside, under the surface to often times remove or repair the problem.

Leviticus also revealed that leprosy spreads (Leviticus 13:7-8).

In the same way, sin spreads. It may start small, or seemingly unthreatening, but if not treated, it will spread, corrupt and defile. What began as a small thought on the inside can begin to spread to the outside and affect the whole. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. We need to be careful and seek to stop the bad growth at its root.

Another interesting thing about leprosy is that it numbs the senses in the afflicted area. You lose feeling. And so it is as sin easily spreads you begin to lose feeling or conviction of right and wrong. If left unchecked you get comfortable with it and become trapped in a state of numbness where sin will eat away at you with you being very much unaware. Be careful, sin is not to be tolerated!

And it's fitting that leprosy is the first recorded miracle in the New Testament. Because Jesus came to make us whole. To do so He needed to provide for our sin problem. His coming was not to make us feel better, but to make us clean.

The life of the leper was a miserable existence. So too, the one who lives in sin is never going to be happy. It's a miserable existence.

If you were walking down the street and saw another person coming, you were required to yell, *'Unclean, unclean!'* People would cross the street and do whatever they needed to do to avoid you.

- One rabbi bragged that he wouldn't even eat an egg bought in a street where a leper passed by.
- Another rabbi actually boasted about throwing stones at lepers to keep them away. And they would justify it by claiming their leprosy was the outpouring of God's judgment on them.

This is what makes this encounter with Jesus so amazing. We don't see Jesus running the opposite direction, thinking, *'I'm God, I can't be around this sort of person!'* We see the compassion, kindness and grace of Jesus. He receives this man and ministers to him.

But notice how this man comes to Jesus. He comes worshipping Jesus. He knows Jesus is more than just a good rabbi, He's more than just a good person, He's one worth worshipping. He's worth worshipping because He is God. This leper calls Him **Lord**. It's the first time in Matthew that Jesus is greeted as *Lord*, which was the Greek word *kyrios*, used to translate the Hebrew word 'Yahweh'.

So he recognizes the Lordship and deity of Jesus. That's evident in what this leper asks Jesus. He says, ***If you are willing, you can make me clean.*** He doesn't ask, *Can you make me clean?* He already knows Jesus can, but the question is, *Are you willing?*

- That's an important thing for us to hold before us. Is it His will? You see, we have to understand that there's Jesus' sovereign power, and there's Jesus' sovereign will. He is *able* to heal, but is it His *will* to heal.
- When you're dealing with a sickness or disease, you can always pray according to God's sovereign power. He absolutely is able to heal. But sometimes His sovereign will is to do something else in the midst of that sickness; something that's going to be of even greater blessing to you or

bring greater glory to God. And that may require you to endure that sickness.

- In the case of this leper, it was the will of God to heal him. In the case of Paul and his thorn in his side, it was not. But God was going to reveal something of even greater help to Paul through it – that His grace would be sufficient, and that His strength would be made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Now could you imagine this touch from the Master’s hand? Who knows how long it had been since this man with leprosy had any human contact. Jesus is paving the bridge for those who were otherwise despised and dejected.

- I love this because many find reasons why they are unfit to come to Jesus. Many think they need to clean themselves up before they approach Jesus. But this reveals that Jesus is ready to receive us as we are, but He won’t leave us as we are. Come to Him no matter what your situation. He is ready to touch your life and make you clean.

8:4 - *And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”*

Why would Jesus say to ***tell no one***? Isn’t this a huge thing? Won’t this help people accept Jesus? One would think. But Jesus knew that the response and reaction by people excited over miracles and healings could greatly impede the work He ultimately came to do in sharing the good news and preparing people for the Kingdom of God. We know the religious leaders were inevitably enraged over all that Jesus did and looked for ways to take Him out.

- Jesus was operating on a divine timetable. His time had not yet come (John 7:6). There was lots more work to be done before He would go to the cross.

So Jesus tells him to go and see the priest. This was the requirement given in the Mosaic law for the leper was cured. Two birds were used, one sacrificed and one set free and the priest would pronounce the leper clean. But we have no record of that ever happening. Could you imagine this priest having this leper come to him saying he’s healed of leprosy. The priest would have been flipping through his manual wondering what he needed to do. He’s never had to deal with this before.

But we're not even sure this former leper even got to the priest. Mark's gospel says: *"However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction"* (Mark 1:45).

This man could not contain himself, and I don't blame him. He had something exciting to share with others. This completely turned his life around. But we're in the same boat. We were the living dead, walking around with an incurable condition of sin. There was nothing we could do to stop it. We needed the gracious touch of Jesus to heal us and make us new. Do you recognize the extreme blessing and gift we've been given? It is worth sharing!

In verses 1-4 we see the socially outcast who needed a healing. In verses 5-13 we see the ethnically outcast who also needs a healing. Two types of people often overlooked in society, yet Jesus is there with compassion and grace.

2. Jesus Heals a Centurion Servant – 8:5-13

8:5-7 - *Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, ⁶ saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."* ⁷ And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

A centurion was a Roman officer over a hundred soldiers. This centurion was a high ranking official and he was an honorable man. He showed great concern and compassion for a servant of his who had become paralyzed.

Jesus was ready and willing to come to where this man's servant was and heal him.

8:8-10 - *The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed."* ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this 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 it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

This centurion was very aware of the position of the Jew towards others outside their nation. The Jew despised the Gentile and avoided them at all costs.

A Jew would not enter into the home of a Gentile or else they'd be ceremonially unclean. This centurion knowing this, says, ***Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof...***

But he's a man who exemplifies great faith. He's just asking Jesus to speak the word and he knows that would be enough.

This centurion is familiar with the chain of command. He is under authority but also gives orders.

- This is what authority is really all about. Only those under authority have the right to exercise authority. This man knows he can speak the word and see results. He's aware that if in his limited authority he can have such results, how much more would Jesus, the ultimate authority. ***Only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.***

And Jesus acknowledges the amazing faith this centurion has: ***I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!***

This man had faith to come to Jesus as a Gentile and as one working with Rome. This man had faith to believe that Jesus just needs to speak and there will be power in those words.

- There's only two accounts in the New Testament where it says Jesus ***marveled***. One is here and the other is in Mark 6:6, "*And He marveled because of their unbelief...*" This was regarding Israel's unbelief at Nazareth.

8:11-12 - And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus gives some hints regarding the inclusion of many in His kingdom. The Jews thought this was an honour exclusive to the Jews. They would be the ones invited to the Messianic banquet in that day along with the patriarch heroes. But Jesus makes a claim that would have startled many listening this day. The kingdom is going to be opened up and filled with many that will come from outside Israel. They will not be of Hebrew descent. And those that thought they were getting in simply because of their heritage would be mistaken. And much worse, as they would be ***cast out into outer darkness***. This speaks of the judgment where there will be ***weeping and gnashing of teeth***.

- "Matthew frequently mentioned this reaction to judgment (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30), and Luke mentioned it once (Luke 13:28). Each time it is used, it refers to judgment on sinners before the Millennium is

established. “Weeping” suggests sorrow and grief (emotional agony of the lost in hell), and grinding of one’s teeth speaks of pain (physical agony in hell).”¹

Jesus mentions these things here to reveal to people that you don’t get in because of your birthright. You need to be born again. And that comes through putting your faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness and cleansing of sin.

8:13 - *Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that same hour.*

Jesus sends the centurion off with just His word. As the centurion came in faith, He must continue on in faith. He doesn’t know if this is going to take until he begins to go on his way in faith.

¹ Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). Matthew. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 50). Victor Books.