

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: The Healing Of A Leper

Text: Matthew 8:1-4

Sermon Aim, Proposition: To prove who Jesus is.

Introduction: Matthew 8 picks up where Matthew 4:23-25 leaves off. The Sermon on the Mount is a parenthesis in between. In that sermon up on the mountain, Jesus turned the religious world upside down with His teaching. The context of the time was this era was filled with disease and sickness. No modern medicine, as we know it, was available. Those who survived did so because the disease ran its course. Even after surviving a disease, many were left with after effects, maimed or crippled and often still in pain of some sorts. Plagues would often wipe out entire villages.

Jesus healed many who came to Him, and He did so without **fanfare**, **gimmicks**, and **spectacles** that we have seen in recent decades. We live a society where good health is normal. We can hardly imagine a time where a common cold or flu type virus could wipe out entire towns. We have medicine, vitamins and the like to help care for our bodies. Modern surgeries and medical advancements cure diseases. So you can understand the “large crowds” in Matthew 4:25; 8:1 that were following Him.

Jesus gave this power to His disciples too. In Matthew 10:8-9 “**Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. ⁹Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts.**” People would give their life savings to have a healing or good health. And Jesus instructed His disciples not to take any money. The era of “word faith” movement, where people are told to “sow faith seeds” for **healings** and **financial wealth** is **corrupt**. No one could **deny** the **miracles** that **were occurring**.

#1 - THE LEPER AND WHO HE IS

A leper was considered one of the **lowest form of human by the religious Jews**. They were considered outcasts of society. In section 1-17 we see three miracles, a leper, a centurion and a woman. To the Jews these were the **three of the lowest form of humans there was**. According to Leviticus 13 there were many different skin diseases of the day. The priests would verify if one had leprosy. A series of test would be conducted, a seven day isolation and then another seven if necessary.

Leviticus 13:45-46 “**As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ ⁴⁶He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.**”

➡ Effects of leprosy

➡ Social status of lepers

Many skin diseases of the day, but this was true leprosy. Thus the magnitude of the miracle! Effects were physical maladies

#2 - JESUS MET THE BASIC NEED OF HUMANS, THE PHYSICAL

His miracles were proof that He is God (vs. 3). There is more to life than **physical**, I know. But Jesus here and many other places **meets the very basic need of humans**. A life of suffering was not uncommon in these days. And to have a miracle to be relived of this was huge. It had never been done. In later verses (we will do next

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week) there's a centurion's servant who is healed and Peter's mother-in-law. People with all kinds of maladies are healed.

#3 - THE LEPER'S APPROACH FOR HEALING

I want to take note of a few things about this miracle account. **He came to Him**, lepers didn't approach anyone. Can you imagine the crowd scattering as they seen a leper approach? He came to Him in **humility**. His condition was **helpless** and **Jesus** is the **only one that could help him**.

He came in **humility**, **beseeking** Him, or **bowing down to Him**. The Greek word "beseech" can be translated "worship." While the Pharisees were all **decked out in their clothes**, here comes a **diseased, poorly dressed** man who **worships** the **King**. He said **Lord** not in the sense of sir, but in **true reference to Him being God**

His faith was **"you can make me clean."** We all know today what God can do, He can do anything. One commentator notes that *"he had no question about Jesus' healing power, but that He would pass by."*

Jesus touched him. The rabbis would avoid a leper at all costs. And if you touched a leper you would be ceremonial unclean. But Jesus touched him. **When we touch disease we get contaminated. When Jesus touches it gets cleansed. Whatever the Lord touches is healed and cleansed.** In fact, it was not a process of time the leper was healed, it was **immediate**. So called healers today, don't heal at all, most if not all is a **gimmick** of **fake healings**. None of them go to the cancer centers, hospitals or hospice places. Jesus' healing was instant.

Peter Popoff, Robert Tilton, Benny Hinn, Oral Roberts etc all claimed to be healers. But when healings didn't happen it was the "faith" of the one seeking it.

#4 - DON'T TELL ANYONE, WHY?

Jesus told him to go and present himself to the priest, in other words, **be obedient to the law**. Matthew 5:17 **"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill."** This was obedience. Go and fulfill the law. **When people see you are clean, they will wonder, how?** You can tell them of the touch of Jesus. **It is how we live, more often than not, than what we say which determines who we truly are.** However, the man did tell, I mean who wouldn't right? Could it have been people saw him and he began to tell? Mark 1:45 **"But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere."**

#5 - GO TO THE PRIEST AND BE OBEDIENT?

A priest would inspect the leper and if clean an offering would be made, cf. Lev. 14

One of the the truths **about conversion is obedience**. Jesus told the man to be obedient to the law after he was healed. In fact, Leviticus gives the process for such cleansing. You had to take two birds, and you had to kill one of them over running water. In addition, they take cedar, scarlet, and hyssop; you take them with the living bird, dip it in the blood of the dead bird, and then send the living bird to fly away. It's a picture of resurrection. Then you wash yourself and your clothes, shave yourself, seven days are allowed to pass, and you're reexamined. Then you shave your hair, your head, and your eyebrows. Sacrifices are then made consisting of two male lambs without blemish: one ewe lamb, three-tenths of a measure of fine flour mingled with oil, one other measure of oil. Then you had to touch all the stuff on the tip of your right ear, right thumb, right big toe, mixed with blood. Then a final examination and proclaimed clean.

If you are willing, and that's how we pray. We know He can. We pray for His will.

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Why did this matter? After examination and seeing a leper healed with their own eyes, the testimony would be the power of Christ for healing. It would be undeniable.

#6 - WHY THIS MATTER NOW AND THE ANALOGY OF THE TEXT

- ➔ The leprosy was a killing disease. Leprosy is like sin, it's ugly, loathsome and communicable
- ➔ He didn't care about social status, he came to Jesus no matter what people thought
- ➔ He came worshipping, crying "Lord" knowing that Jesus was the only answer for his condition
- ➔ He came humble
- ➔ He came with faith

When we are saved from our sin, death and the wrath of God, there are two things that happen. First, we are obedient to God's commands. Second, we are a testimony to God's saving faith and cleansing power. When you don't go to the places, hang out where you used to, things are different. And people will ask why.