

Jesus' Authority Over Sickness

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 7, verse 28. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand.! If it takes months to preach about Jesus' sermon, his first sermon, you could see how amazing his sermon was.

He gave all that in one sermon. Unbelievable. We're in Matthew chapter 7, verse 28. Before I read, let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word.

Heavenly Father, as we sang earlier this morning, we rely on your Word.

We cling to your Word. As your people, Lord.

We hold on to every word you speak. So we now come eagerly. And we want to hear from you again.

[1 : 30] As you always do when we are gathered in your name. You speak to us. You address us. In your Word. From your Word.

So Lord. With your Word, glorify your name. Reveal yourself to us in the grace, in the love, and the authority of Jesus Christ, your Son.

That we might know you rightly. Relate to you rightly. That we might be healed. For you are our great healer.

The great physician. So meet with us in all of our sins, dysfunctions, diseases here this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand as we honor God before we read His Word. I'm going to start in Matthew 7, 28 and go to chapter 8, verse 17.

[2 : 41] And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at His teaching. 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. And behold, a leper came to Him and knelt before Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.

And Jesus stretched out His hand and touched Him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately His leprosy was cleansed.

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 proof to them. When He had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to Him, appealing to Him, Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.

And He said to Him, I will come and heal Him. 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.

[4 : 02] 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.

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.

I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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. And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever.

He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she rose and began to serve Him. 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.

[5 : 13] This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. He took our illnesses and bore our diseases. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

Please be seated. Whenever there's a party or a networking event, and you encounter someone making grand and impressive claims about themselves, or about the things that they have done, or things that they know, there's a follow-up question that someone in the group usually asks. So, what do you do for a living? Right? It's an indirect question. But the direct question that's underlying that indirect question is, you know, are these grand, impressive claims that you're making for real?

Are these claims related to your line of work or your field of expertise? In other words, do you have the authority to speak on such matters?

Who are you to make such grand claims? That's the same question that's burning as we read the Sermon on the Mount, as the hearers in the first century would have heard Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

[6 : 36] That's the same question that's burning in people's hearts. Who are you? Do you have the authority to say the kinds of things that you are saying, Jesus?

Because in the Beatitudes in chapter 5, Jesus declared authoritatively, these are the people to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs.

Who are you to say that? How do you know? And then Jesus set his teaching in chapter 5 of Matthew over and against two millennia of Jewish legal teaching of the Old Testament, all the legal precedents.

And then Jesus authoritatively declared how the Jewish leaders were wrong and how he is right in saying, you have heard that it was said, but I say to you. Setting himself in contrast over two millennia of Jewish legal tradition and teaching.

And he said, not only that, that he has come to fulfill the entire law and the prophets in Matthew 5, 17 to 20. Here's all the requirements of God's law. I've come to fulfill it.

[7 : 48] All of it. Every jot and tittle. Not a dot and iota will perish from the law. Meaning he's saying even the very smallest part of the law, he will himself fulfill it. Not only that, he made even bolder claims.

And toward the end of his sermon in chapter 7 that we looked at, Jesus declared himself to be the Lord that people will call upon as judge on the final day of judgment.

People will come to Jesus and say, Lord, Lord. Lord. And not only did Jesus say that only those who does the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven, he switched that at the end of his sermon and said, whoever does my will, whoever obeys my words, he is the one who enters the kingdom of heaven.

These are grand claims. What kind of man dares to speak in such a manner?

Who are you, Jesus? That's what we see here in chapter 7, verse 28 to 29. And this is the crowd's conclusion. When Jesus had finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching.

[9 : 00] Why were they astonished? It says, For he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes. When Jesus first began to preach his sermon, after climbing up into the mountain, chapter 5, verse 1 to 2, he was speaking directly to his disciples, his inner circle of followers.

But we can see here that in the course of the sermon, the crowds have assembled around him to kind of observe and to eavesdrop on what he was teaching his disciples. So this is the crowds that were observing the kind of things he was saying.

And they conclude that he taught as someone who had authority, not like their scribes. This is a fascinating and revealing observation. Because who are these scribes?

These scribes are the Jewish legal scholars. They're the ones who have the authority to teach the Jews what God's word says.

They're the ones who are sanctioned by the governing bodies. They are the so-called experts, the establishment. And yet here is Jesus.

[10 : 11] From the perspective of the Jewish leaders, Jesus is this upstart, itinerant preacher, a carpenter's son. And these people who hear him teach say, oh, he has authority, not the scribes.

It's an amazing statement. When you go into a doctor's office or a professor's office, you usually find on their walls the certifications and the diplomas.

This is a way of establishing your credentials. I have the training. I have the authority to speak on the things that I'm about to speak about. That's how, in a sinful world, that is necessary.

Because people lie and there are fakes. And so people need credentials. And we need credentialing bodies. And that's what these doctors and professors have. And I think that's especially important in the age of YouTube and TikTok when everybody can have a platform and everybody can be a self-proclaimed authority on all kinds of things.

Right? So this is important. So I'm not poo-pooing such credentials. Sorry, is that funny? Yeah, funny word, yeah. However, it's notable that Jesus did not have such credentials.

[11 : 25] No human governing board gave Jesus any certification or authorization. Jesus, in fact, it says in John 2.25, needed no man to bear witness about him.

Why? Because it says in John 5.37, The Father who sent him has himself borne witness about him. At Jesus' baptism, God the Father said, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. That's Jesus' certification. That's Jesus' authorization. It did not come from man. It came from God himself. This is not human authority.

It's divine spiritual authority. And when you look at someone with divine spiritual authority like Jesus, all human authorities pale in comparison, like a firefly that is buzzing in front of the sun. And so they marveled that Jesus taught them as one who had authority and not as their scribes. So that's the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount.

[12 : 35] And in the following passages of chapters 8 and 9, Matthew recounts nine miracle stories. And they're intended to demonstrate Jesus' comprehensive authority over diseases and natural disasters and demons and even over death itself.

These nine miracle stories are arranged in groups of three. And today we're looking at the first group of three, which highlight in particular Jesus' authority over diseases. Jesus' authority as our healer.

And the main point of this passage is that Jesus is the Lord who has authority to heal us. So first we're going to look at the leper. Second, the Gentile centurion.

And third, we're going to look at the elderly and the infirm, Peter's mother-in-law, that Jesus heals. When Jesus comes down from the mountain, the great crowds, it says, are following him. At that very moment, there's a leper who takes an extraordinary risk and makes a bold move in stopping Jesus in his tracks.

He approaches Jesus as he's walking with the crowds. And then he kneels before Jesus and then he pleads, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

[13 : 47] The word leprosy can refer to a range of disfiguring, debilitating, contagious skin diseases. Because it was contagious, Leviticus 13 to 14, which gives very detailed rules and stipulations about people with leprosy, it said that lepers were to be regarded as ceremonially, ritually unclean.

They were required to wear torn clothes. And they were required to let their hairs hang loose so that it would be obvious to all passersby, oh, there's a leper.

Oh, there's a leper. Stay away. Torn clothes, loose hair. When being approached by people or when approaching people, lepers were required to call out, unclean, unclean, to warn people that they were lepers that are approaching.

They couldn't just call out on their own, just as loud as it would. They had to actually cover their upper lip as they called out, unclean, unclean. It doesn't say why they had to cover their upper lip. I imagine it's because you don't even want spittle coming out that can potentially defile someone. So imagine just how humiliating this disease is and how socially isolating it is.

[15 : 09] There were other things in the Old Testament that made people ritually and ceremonially unclean, like touching a corpse or bodily discharge or touching something.

You know, these things caused uncleanness too, but only temporarily. And you could do the ritual cleansing and wait a couple days or weeks, depending on what it was, and you'll be clean again.

With lepers, there's no such hope of an expiration date of their uncleanness because leprosy was permanent and you were permanently unclean, permanently cut off from society.

They were deemed dirty, unfit for society. And for this reason, even though the New Testament normally uses the language of healing for diseases, when it comes to lepers, it consistently uses language, not of healing, but of cleansing.

So when Jesus instructs his 12 apostles in Matthew 10, 8, to go and proclaim the gospel, proclaim the kingdom of God, he adds this. He says, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers.

[16:21] Leprosy was medically incurable. In 2 Kings 5, verse 7, the king of Syria sends his military commander, Naaman, who had heard rumors of an amazing, wonder-working prophet in Israel, to go to the land of Israel so that he could receive healing for his leprosy.

And being an important person, he goes straight to the king of Israel, thinking that, of course, he's the one who's going to know where I can receive healing in Israel. And when Naaman sends the letter over to him from his own king, king of Syria, the king reads it, Israelite king, and then he tears his clothes in indignation and says, am I God to kill and to make alive? that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider and see how he's seeking a quarrel with me.

The king, who has all the authority and power of his kingdom, thinks that curing a leper is impossible, on par with raising the dead.

So much so that he says, am I God? Only God can do that. When we consider all this background, then we can really appreciate the faith of this leper and the risk that he took in approaching Jesus.

[17:42] Perhaps it's also indicative of his desperation. In other parts of the gospel, in Matthew 20, when, for example, blind men are calling out to Jesus on the streets, the crowds that follow him are annoyed by these blind men.

It's like, hey, stop shouting. Move out of the way. But these blind men were just a nuisance. This leper is not just a nuisance.

He's a contagion. He's a public health threat. And they're in Jesus' way. So imagine the gasping and crowds and backing up as this leper is approaching Jesus.

And this leper falls on his knees before Jesus and says in verse two, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. This is an amazing confession on a number of levels.

First, he addresses Jesus as Lord. This is a Greek word that can be used conventionally to mean sir, as just a polite way of referring to your social superior.

[18:46] But in the context of Matthew's gospel, I want to argue that it's a more theologically loaded term. It's a heavyweight term. Because remember, Jesus appropriates this title, Lord, for himself for the very first time in the gospel of Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7, when he declares himself to be the judge and ruler over all on the final day of judgment.

He's Lord. That's when he's first called Lord. So that's in the background of our minds when we come to this passage right on the heels of that. And then this leper calls Jesus Lord. Moreover, the fact that this leper believes that Jesus has the authority, the power to heal him, to cleanse him, when all of Old Testament says, leprosy, no one cures but God, also shows that he sees something more than just a polite sir when he calls him Lord.

He's acknowledging the lordship of Christ, which is why he kneels before him, which is the appropriate posture of subjection and humility before your master.

And then this leper says, if you will, not if you can. If you will, you can make me clean.

It's such an amazing, commendable faith. How many times do we ask God for things and then we just lose track of it altogether? We don't follow up about it because we're not really expecting anything to happen.

[20:25] That's not a prayer of if you will. That's a prayer of if you can, God. But this leper says, if you can, not if you can, if you will, then you can make me clean.

He submits himself to the authority of Jesus and the willingness of Jesus to heal. And Jesus' response is shocking. He says in verse 3 that Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean.

Remember, this is no ordinary sick person. This is a leper with a contagious skin disease. To touch a leper was to contract ceremonial defilement.

Not only ceremonial defilement, it was to expose yourself to actual contagious disease. So you can imagine the horror of the crowds as Jesus is stretching out his hand to do that.

And Jesus is not like, you know, he's not pulling out these latex gloves and putting it on before he touches him. He just stretches out his hand and touches the leper.

[21:45] This leper probably has not had anyone, anyone healthy, anyone besides other lepers, touch him in a long time. It's a very humanizing and compassionate gesture from Lord Jesus to stretch out his hand and touch this leper.

And yes, it's true that Jesus' usual mode of operation when it came to healing was to lay hands on them and to heal them, hands on people. That is true and that is somewhat what's going on here.

However, you know, Jesus didn't have to do that. We know, for example, from the immediately following passage that Jesus can heal someone from a distance.

Jesus can heal people without going there in person and touching them. So why couldn't he do the same here with this dangerous leper? He touches the leper not out of necessity, but out of compassion, out of mercy.

He's not only cleansing this leper of his leprosy, he's also rehabilitating him and healing him from the pain of isolation, rejection, and alienation.

[23 : 00] And as he touches the leper, Jesus says, I will be clean. The simplicity of that answer just conveys the commanding authority that Jesus has, a simple indicative.

I will. I am willing. You asked me if you will, I can make you clean. You are right. I will. I'm willing. And then simply a command, be clean.

And it says in verse three, immediately his leprosy was cleansed. It's no gradual fading of the skin disease. It's no natural healing over time. Immediately, with Jesus's word, the leper is cleansed.

This immediate healing showcases Jesus's authority, that he is the Lord who has the authority to heal us. Afterward, Jesus tells this leper in verse four, 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.

In the gospels, especially in Mark, Jesus often tells people that he heals not to speak of the miracle. We'll see this again later in Matthew 9, 30, and 12, 16. And in Matthew 12, 17 to 21, Matthew actually gives us the reason why Jesus does this by quoting from Isaiah 42, verses one to four.

[24 : 25] And there, I'm not quoting the full thing, but part of it, it says that the Messiah will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.

In other words, Jesus is never going to be showboating. He's never going to be posting advertisements of himself all across towns of this wonder worker that is coming into town.

That's not the way he does his miracles. Jesus does not want to stir up a feverish crowd of followers because that will prevent him, hamper him from doing the mission that he has set out to do, which is to proclaim the kingdom of God.

God. So instead, Jesus tells him, go quietly, go to the priest, make the appropriate offering as specified in Leviticus 13 to 14 so that you can be formally declared clean by the priest and reenter society.

And then, in verses 5 to 6, the scene moves to Capernaum where a centurion comes forward to Jesus appealing to him, Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.

[25 : 36] A centurion is an officer in the Roman army and Capernaum is Roman-occupied territory and this, all centurions would have been Gentiles and we know this explicitly because verse 10 tells us, Jesus says, truly I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

So Jesus is saying that this Gentile centurion has more faith than I've seen in all Israel, among all the Jews. So this is a Gentile centurion. Apparently, this centurion's servant is paralyzed.

We don't know exactly what that means. He's suffering terribly. Maybe he has strokes. Maybe he has polio. We have no idea. But whatever the case, it's something for which there is no easy medical solution because there was a quick or accessible medical solution.

Then this centurion with means could have simply gone to the doctors and gotten it. And this centurion too, like the leper, addresses Jesus as Lord.

And this is remarkable because it's followed immediately by him referring to my servant. The centurion is himself a lord. He has a servant under his authority.

[26 : 50] And yet, he calls Jesus his lord. This is all upside down because in Roman society, the Romans are the occupying powers.

The Jews are the occupied. Roman centurion is an officer in the Roman army of the powerful occupiers and his social standing is higher than that of Jesus in the Roman Empire.

And yet, the centurion too humbles himself and calls Jesus lord. Again, the fact that he has faith that Jesus has this kind of authority shows it's no mere polite sir.

It's lord. The lord of authority. The lord over creation. Jesus responds in verse 7 in the ESV.

It says, I will come and heal him. Is anybody using the NIV or the CSB, New International Version, or the, okay, a few of you at the Christian Standard Bible?

[27 : 56] So those two versions have a question. Is that right? You guys have a question instead of a statement. It says, am I to come and heal him? Jesus asks a question instead.

This is, the uncertainty about this is because in the original manuscript in the Greek there are no punctuation marks. So you have to use the context to determine whether it's a statement or a question.

So it could be either. It's a judgment call and you can't be sure but I do lean toward the NIV and the CSB's translation in this instance. Because of the way it parallels Jesus' interaction with the Gentile woman, the Canaanite woman later in Matthew 15 verse 21 to 28.

First, these are the only two miracle stories in the Gospel of Matthew where the beneficiaries of Jesus' healing are explicitly said to be Gentiles. And then second, these are the only two miracle stories in Matthew where Jesus heals someone from a distance.

And third, these are the only two miracle stories in Matthew where Jesus commends the extraordinary faith of the people who came to him. So there's a lot of parallels.

[29 : 07] He says to the centurion in verse 10, truly I tell you with no one in Israel have I found such faith. To the Canaanite woman in 15:28, Jesus says, oh woman, great is your faith. I think these parallels are deliberate and for that reason I expect other aspects of Jesus' interaction with this Gentile centurion to match his interaction with this Gentile Canaanite woman later on in Matthew 15.

In Matthew 15, if you know the story, the Canaanite woman asks Jesus to heal her daughter who is oppressed, sorely oppressed by a demon and Jesus does not immediately assent like he does here according to the ESV translation.

I will come and heal him. No, he says first, no. He says, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

Jesus initially refuses. Why? In order to test the Gentile woman's faith, are you willing to humble yourself as a Gentile before me?

Acknowledge that I am a Jewish Messiah, that salvation is from the Jews and are we willing to beg for mercy? And this woman's extraordinary faith, her great faith overcomes Jesus' initial refusal.

[30 : 29] And then Jesus commends her faith and heals her daughter. I think the same sequence is happening in our passage. In verse 7, Jesus is not immediately assenting to the centurion's request. If he was just saying, I will come and heal him, I think it's a little presumptuous of the centurion to be like, oh, no, no, no, you don't come.

You know, I mean, this is, you can't come, you're not worried, I'm not worried to have you. He's saying, I'll come. Just, you know what I mean? He's saying, no, no, I don't think that's what's going on. I think he's saying, shall I myself come and heal him?

And he's pushing back, challenging him, asking the question. I think this is just translation is confirmed by the fact that in the Greek, Jesus uses an emphatic first person pronoun, I myself. Shall I myself come and heal him? Should I, a Jewish Messiah, come to your house, a Gentile, that no Jews would enter into, no law-abiding Jews would enter into in those days, to heal your servant? Jesus is again testing the centurion's faith. Does he have the humility to acknowledge the appropriate place of Gentiles in salvation history? That salvation is first from the Jews before it goes out among the Gentiles.

[31 : 46] Is he willing to humble himself before Jesus? Good for this Gentile centurion, he passes Jesus' test with flying colors. He replies in verses eight to nine, Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant will be healed.

For I too am a man under authority with soldiers under me. 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. He is saying, of course, Jesus, of course, Lord, I'm a Gentile, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof.

I wasn't presuming that you would do that. However, I am a soldier in a military hierarchy and I understand the nature of authority. I know that all you need to do is say the word and it will be done. The centurion, like anyone who has ever served in the armed forces, understands authority. He knows what it's like to be under authority. He knows what it's like to have authority over others. As the saying goes, I don't know where this originated from, but if your commanding officer says jump, you don't ask, why? You ask, how high, sir?

[33 : 02] And then you jump. This centurion is used to that. He says go, they go. He says come, they come.

He says do this, they do it because he has authority over them. And this is especially important in the military hierarchy because you have to, and they're always trying to during training to break the

soldiers, to get in the habit of obeying authority because people are not used to that, I think, especially, and because if you, you have to assume that your authority figure knows better than you.

You have to assume that you don't have complete information because if you doubt and question and delay and hesitate and you don't follow orders in the military, you can mean life or death. So the centurion knows and understands authority.

So, but what he's implying is staggering. He's implying that Jesus has authority over disease.

Yeah, sure, human beings, like, they can understand you, so you can command them to do things and they'll do it, but a disease?

[34 : 19] Who has authority over disease? He's implying, suggesting that Jesus is the Lord of creation, the Lord by whom the world came to be, the Lord of heaven and earth, who has authority over even sickness and health and life and death and all he needs to do is say the word, leave paralysis and it leaves.

Jesus is the Lord who has authority to heal us. This leads to Jesus' commendation of a centurion in verse 10. Truly I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

It's amazing that it says that Jesus marveled at this man's faith. That word marvel or amazed is usually used to refer to people being amazed by Jesus. This here is the only place where it's used of Jesus being amazed by someone else.

Imagine having that in your spiritual bio. This man made Jesus marvel at his faith. Amazing. And then that commendation is followed by an amazing promise in verses 11 to 12.

I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness.

[35 : 45] In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. What is in view here is the heavenly messianic banquet that Isaiah 25 verse 6 prophesied of and speaks of reclining at table like lying down at table which is what how people in the ancient Near East dine when they're eating especially at a feast.

So this is referring to a feast. It's the end time feast of the kingdom of heaven where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will also be present. So Jesus is echoing the prophecies of Isaiah 59 19 and Malachi 1 11 which speaks of from the east to the west from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun nations from all over the world coming to worship God.

It will no longer be Jews only who submit to the kingship of God and worship him in the kingdom of heaven but it will also be the Gentile nations who do that. because of his amazing faith this centurion becomes the harbinger of that in gathering of the Gentiles to come.

He becomes one of the first fruits of that Gentile harvest that Jesus brings about. This is why after his death and resurrection Jesus commissions his disciples not to go to the people of Israel only which was the case during Jesus' life before his death but after his death and resurrection he commissions them to go and make disciples of all nations.

It's the broadening and the extending of this mission of God to save and seek and save the lost. In fact Jesus prophesies here that many of the Jews the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[37 : 34] Gnashing probably suggests anger just grinding teeth and anger. He's saying that many of the Jews will reject Jesus as their Messiah and therefore will be cast out which is consistent with the parables of the parable of the defaulting tenants in Matthew 21 as well as the parable of the wedding feast in chapter 22 where many of the sons of the kingdom the Jews are invited but they refuse to come to the wedding feast.

Of course Jesus is not saying that all Jews are excluded because he is a Jew and all his apostles are Jews but rather he is speaking of the radical reconstitution of the people of God that you will no longer be Jews only it's now both Jews and Gentiles.

So this centurion becomes the first of many Gentiles who will come to follow Jesus in the New Testament and beyond and his servant is healed immediately like the leper he says in verse 13 Jesus said go let it be done for you as you have believed and the servant was healed at that very moment again highlighting the authority of Jesus to heal instantaneous miraculous healing.

That brings us to the final healing miracle of this section verse 14 to 17. The first story was about the outcast leper the second story is about this alien the foreign Gentile and this third story is also about someone who is usually overlooked in society and this third category is the elderly and the infirm.

Jesus is at Peter's house in Capernaum and notice that Peter is not the one who asks Jesus to heal his mother-in-law.

[39 : 12] I don't know why when a young person is sick usually people ask pray for healing when a really really old person is sick people sometimes ask for prayer that they would die well maybe quick quickly and painlessly the expectations change as people age and maybe that's the case here it's normal and expected for an elderly person to be infirm but Jesus does not overlook this elderly woman either he is the one who first sees her he is the one who first initiates and approaches her and touches her hand and Jesus commanding authority is evident again in verse 15 when it says that fever left her it's an incredible use of personification the personifying of fever fever fevers don't have feet they're not people they don't leave right and yet that language kind of highlights it dramatizes what the story of the centurion just said if you have authority you say go and they go and you say come and they come and when Jesus touched Peter's mother-in-law's hand this fever suddenly grew feet and then he fled that's the kind of authority that Jesus wields this woman who was formerly useless unable to help with anything now rises up to serve and it leads to a full evening of busy ministry where many are exercised and healed and again

Jesus' authority is highlighted it says in verse 16 he cast out demons with a word say the word Jesus with a word he casts out demons there's no need for elaborate rituals and bells and incenses just a simple word and then Matthew gives us a summary of what has taken place so far with a quotation from Isaiah 53 verse 4 he took our illnesses and bore!

our diseases this verse is part of the most famous servant song of Isaiah in Isaiah 52 and 53 and it prophesies of the Messiah the coming Messiah and we read this for assurance of pardon it says in Isaiah 53 verses 3 to 5 he was despised and rejected by men a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows yet we esteemed him stricken smitten by God and afflicted but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy that's what that's what Matthew is telling us Jesus is the man of sorrows who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows or as Matthew puts it he took our illnesses and bore our diseases when Jesus the son of God took on human flesh and lived as a man here on earth he embraced the full range of human suffering and sorrows he wept at the sight of death at his friend

Lazarus' tomb he saw many who were sick and sorely oppressed by demons and Jesus did not stay aloof quarantined from our sorrows and sufferings he came into our world to take up our sufferings and he dealt with us compassionately as we see in this morning's passage but Jesus did not come merely to deal with our sicknesses because if that were the case he would be dealing with the symptoms only and not with the root disease and the cost because the leper who was healed by Jesus and the centurion servant and Peter's mother-in-law they all eventually died again because the wages of sin is death in fact all diseases and all suffering in this world is a symptom is an effect of sin which has come into our world if Jesus does not save us from sin then he is not a complete savior but thanks be to God

Jesus came to deal with our sins once and for all and that's really the main main point of Isaiah 53 it uses the metaphor of sickness and diseases and how Jesus takes those things away from us and to speak also of how he takes our sins away from us and that's exactly how 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 24 cites Isaiah 53 he says 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 from our sins we are saved by his wounds on the cross because Jesus on the cross was bearing our sins and so it is not inappropriate then to see in these healing miracles a picture of the healing that Jesus accomplishes in our lives as sinners because we are all in one sense lepers sin is contagious if you doubt that read the newspaper sin is contagious it's the greatest contagion that has ever existed in the history of humanity we are all lepers we all deserve to stay far away from Jesus far away from God and at a distance cry out with covering our upper lips unclean unclean stay away from me that's the faith that we deserve but in Jesus

[45 : 20] God reached out his hand and he touched us an amazing thing about that is that you know in the Old Testament it was taken for granted when holy things things that have been consecrated for holiness are touched by unclean things or people people will touch who are unclean and unconsecrated non-priests if they were to touch consecrated holy things they would

defile them make those things unclean right but if the if the person if a person you know touches something they didn't become holy by those things they instead spread the unholiness the uncleanness by their act Haggai chapter 2 verse 11 to 13 makes this explicit that the person unconsecrated person does not become holy by coming into contact with holy things but he does become unclean when he comes into touch with unclean things uncleanness is contagious holiness is not generally speaking this is the but remarkably in the case of the leper this works exactly in reverse instead of

Jesus becoming leprous and uncleanness and unholiness spreading to him this leper is made clean how does that happen how does it work because that's not how it worked in the Old Testament uncleanness here cleanness of Jesus spreads because it's a picture of what Jesus accomplishes on the cross on the cross he bears our sins he absorbs the father's just wrath so that instead of us our unholy sinners lepers coming into contact with Jesus spreading our uncleanness to him his cleanness is brought to us we are declared righteous maybe some of you feel this morning you're weighing you're weighed down by your own sin and guilt as we were praying this morning this passage came to mind for Lauren and we'll share with you from Psalm 34 verse 18 the Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit if you are feeling that guilt and shame and thinking that God would not want anything to do with me see the picture of

Jesus who stretches out his hand and touches the leper and be clean maybe you're an unbeliever here this morning you feel like an outsider looking in maybe you feel like that Gentile centurion I'm not worthy to have you come into my house but Jesus again here teaches us in this picture when he heals the centurion's servant if you have the faith to say just say the word Jesus just say the word I will cling to your word if you say saved if you say cleansed and I will believe it if you have that faith you will be clean do you believe that Jesus is the savior who died for your sins and was raised from the dead for you do you cling to his word Romans 8 33 34 says who shall bring any charge against God's elect it is God who justifies who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us God the father has appointed Jesus as the Lord and judge over all if he has said over you clean if he has said over you justified then who are you to say oh no I cannot be I cannot be cleansed I cannot be forgiven I cannot be I'm under condemnation cling cling to the word of Jesus Christ this morning I will be clean let's pray together yes father we are sinful we are lepers gentileskers this to seek and save the lost. We thank you that now because of him, we who were once aliens and foreigners and strangers have been brought near, that you are near us, that you indwell us.

[51 : 11] God, please reassure all your saints here this morning of the word you have declared over them in Jesus. And Lord, grant all unbelievers here now, non-Christians here, the faith to cling to your word.

Be clean. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.