

The Healing of Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 April 2008

Preacher: Paul Barker

[0 : 0 0] Let me encourage you to open again the Bibles at page 790 and we're continuing a sermon series through Matthew chapters 8 to 11 or 12 over the next few weeks, last few and the next few weeks and let's pray. God our Heavenly Father speak to us from your word now, give us hearts and minds to believe, to follow Jesus and to bring glory to him in our lives and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

They say there's none so blind as those who will not see and though the origins of that precise expression are unclear, they probably come from biblical background and there are few places in the Bible that better illustrate that than this passage here today. There's none so blind as those who will not see.

Ironically, true in the face of blind people being given their sight. Jesus is continuing a Galilean ministry of healing. Matthew probably has grouped together various accounts of Jesus' healing in a sequence of these two chapters so far, chapters 8 and 9, following on from Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 to 7.

And we've seen over the last few weeks Jesus healing a leper, Jesus healing the Gentile centurion's servant, a woman who had a fever, casting out demons from two demoniacs, healing a paralysed man, and now a further selection. And whilst we still see the adulation, the crowd of the crowd, the acclaim and excitement of the crowd of people with Jesus, the undercurrent of dissent and opposition that we saw a little bit last week, now begins to grow and strengthen.

Jesus is firstly petitioned by a man, a leader of the synagogue, probably a lay member in the leadership of the Jewish gatherings at a synagogue. Even today there are the ruins of the synagogue at Capernaum, which is probably where Jesus is at this time. And though the ruins of today's synagogue date from a couple of hundred years after Jesus' life, the underneath of that synagogue is built on the foundations of the synagogue of Jesus' day. This man was called Jairus, though Matthew doesn't tell us that, but that's in the same story in Luke and Mark's Gospels, that's his name. Matthew abbreviates his stories quite significantly and doesn't here give us his name. But Jairus is his name, and a Jewish man, a respected man, no doubt, as a leader in the synagogue, comes to Jesus and he kneels before him, which is a sign, if not of some worship of high reverence and respect for Jesus.

[3 : 0 6] What he asks of Jesus is an astonishing request. On the one hand, we've seen great miracles in recent weeks, healing people with various diseases. But now Jairus asks for something perhaps even greater.

He says to Jesus in verse 18, My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and she will live.

Well, this is putting Jesus' power at another level in this request. As I say, it's one thing to heal somebody who's sick but living. It's a completely different thing to give life to someone who's dead.

There are, of course, a couple of times in the Old Testament where great prophets actually bring back from the dead a couple of people. Technically, the word for this is resuscitation rather than resurrection. Jesus, when he had his own resurrection, came with then a heavenly body and lived forever.

But these are cases that technically are called resuscitation where somebody comes back to life, but presumably at a later stage will subsequently die. In the case of Elijah, just after the passage that was read for us today in chapter 17 of 1 Kings, he brings back from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath. And then his follower as a prophet, Elisha in 2 Kings 4, brings back from the dead another widow's son, the widow of Shunam's son. To express faith that Jesus can do the same is highly striking and quite significant, putting Jesus on a level with the greatest of Old Testament miracles in effect. Jesus' response is to get up. Presumably he's been sitting down, maybe even at a table eating, and he follows this man and the disciples of Jesus also follow him. Now on the way to go to deal with this man's dead daughter, another incident occurs. This time a woman who's been suffering from hemorrhages for 12 years came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of his cloak.

[5 : 28] This person's had a menstrual bleed for 12 long years. She has a faith like Jairus, but hers is perhaps a little bit tinged with superstition. But remember that someone who's bleeding from menstruation is regarded as ritually unclean in Jewish laws, like a leper and so on. It's not because of any sin. It's just that the signals of being ritually clean and therefore part of the assembly of God's people preclude various people with different illnesses or conditions, including having given birth to children and so on. It doesn't necessarily mean a moral failure at all.

But therefore she's lived in a sense on the outer for 12 years. And so we could understand her going up behind Jesus and just wanting to touch his cloak, possibly because of an element of superstition, possibly also because to touch a person if you're unclean would render that person whom you touch are also unclean. And so Jesus and maybe she's therefore just wanting to touch Jesus' cloak, maybe an element of shame and embarrassment about her condition.

Well, Jesus, this woman says to herself in verse 21, if I only touch his cloak, I'll be made well. And Jesus turns and sees her and said, take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well.

Now we need to be clear here what's going on. It's not her superstition that has healed her, nor is it technically the power of her faith that's made her well.

But rather in response to her faith, Jesus heals her. And that's very clear the way Matthew tells this story. It is Jesus saying you're healed or saved, literally, in response to her action, in response to her faith.

[7 : 41] That is, the power to heal rests not in her innate or inherent faith, but in Jesus. And when he says your faith has made you well, her faith is the means of receiving or appropriating the power of Jesus.

That is, her faith is in Jesus and it is Jesus who heals. That is, it's not a sense of abstract faith or positive thinking or powerful thoughts that heal her, but it is Jesus who heals her.

A faith directed towards Jesus, even a superstitious faith at some level, but directed to Jesus brings healing. There's an element of encouragement here, something that we saw a week or two ago as well in this series, that it's not the amount of faith.

It's not that we've got to have perfect faith, but rather whatever faith we have, if it's placed and rests in Jesus, who is powerful, that is sufficient.

And here's a woman whose faith may be an element of superstition and so on, but because it's directed to Jesus who heals, she's healed. Because Jesus is merciful and powerful.

[8 : 58] And moreover, the end of verse 22 says, instantly the woman was made well. That's what we've seen in recent weeks.

Person with a fever, instantly made well. Not a few days of gradually getting better. Person who's a leper, instantly well. Not a sequence of days or weeks where all the skin blotches gradually heal, but instantly.

And so too here. Imagine, after 12 years of bleeding, of pain, discomfort, embarrassment and shame, feeling ostracized and on the outer of the religious society, after 12 years of that, instantly well.

Instantly. It's an astonishing power. Well, Jesus now arrives at Jairus' house. We need to recognize a difference in culture here.

For us, a funeral is a quiet and somber affair. And usually, when people come into the church or the funeral parlor or whatever, they're hushed whispers. It's a relatively quiet occasion on the whole.

[10 : 09] Not so in many cultures today. Not so in the Middle East. And even today, we see sometimes the pictures of those who've been bereaved by the terrorism, in effect, and war between different people groups within the Middle East.

And we see the wailing and screaming and shouting of people in grief. That's part of their culture. And so it was in Jesus' day. In fact, one of the Jewish writings, the Mishnah, probably from a little bit after Jesus' day, said that even for poor people, the minimum requirement at a funeral were two flutes and a wailing woman.

And there were people who were professional mourners. Imagine what a job that would be. That you just go around all the funerals. You know, you spend your day out at Springvale, for example, wandering from chapel to chapel or graveside to graveside, being paid to wail and weep.

Well, there's some people who might fit that job description very well, maybe. Not looking at anyone. But that's what's happening here at Jairus' house. We're told, in fact, that there's quite a commotion in verse 23.

Not a commotion in the sense of a riot or anything, but a commotion in the sense of noise, of weeping and wailing, and maybe some shouting. There are flutes playing.

[11 : 27] Presumably there's some professional mourners there to sort of lend their voice with gusto to the occasion. Well, Jesus comes and he said to this crowd of people, in verse 24, Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.

And their response is they laugh at him. Is this a joke? Don't be ridiculous. She's dead. We can see she's dead. She's not breathing. Her body's turning cold.

Depending on how long she's been dead and how far away Jesus has had to come with Jairus, the body may be already beginning to smell. In those days, bodies would decompose much quicker than today.

We eat too many preservatives in our food. Delays our decomposition. And seriously, and of course, if it's warm weather, the body could already be beginning to smell.

It's clear she's dead. There's no doubt about that. The mourners know. The father knows. Everybody knows she's dead. And that's why they laugh at Jesus. What a ridiculous idea to think that she's just asleep.

[12 : 35] And Jesus, then we're told, or rather it's in the passive, when the crowd had been put outside, that is, literally thrown outside or shoved outside, we might say.

It's actually quite a strong word that's used. Come on, get out, out, out, would be the sort of thing we might expect of Jesus, his disciples, or whoever's with him, kicking these people out of the house.

And then Jesus goes in to the house or to the room, took her by the hand, an action that would have made him religiously unclean by touching a corpse, except of course, it doesn't make him unclean because she doesn't stay being a corpse.

the girl got up. And no doubt, no wonder, rather, the report of this spread throughout that district, as verse 26 tells us.

Now, it's nonsense to belittle this as though this is not really a miracle, as though the girl was really rather asleep or maybe in a coma. It's clear she's dead. The crowd knows she's dead.

[13 : 40] They would see the body. They might probably touch the body. The father knows she's dead. Everybody knows she's dead. Death is conquered by Jesus here, bringing back this woman, this young girl perhaps, to life.

Well, might they laugh at him, but how embarrassed they would have felt when they saw her walk out of the house sometime later. Well, next in the healing line are two blind men in verse 27.

Jesus is returning perhaps to Capernaum from Jairus' house or maybe it's very close indeed by, just down the street or something like that. And two blind men followed him crying loudly, have mercy on us, son of David.

Have mercy has got the sense of doing something compassionate and because they're blind, that is, they're really calling out for their sight. But they don't specify that explicitly, simply, have mercy on us.

And by using the title son of David though, they're ascribing to Jesus an element of messianic expectation. David was the great king of Israel a thousand years before Jesus to whom God promised an eternal dynasty.

[14 : 57] There would always be one of the throne of David or the line of David on the throne of Israel. And so Jesus, when he's acclaimed as son of David, has been placed on him messianic expectation.

Here is the king of Israel, the messianic or anointed king. Have mercy on us is implying take away our blindness and give us sight.

Jesus, it seems, doesn't interact with them immediately. Rather, when he entered the house, maybe now back at Peter's mother-in-law house, his base in Capernaum, maybe it's even these men's house, we're not sure, then in private the blind men come to him and Jesus now says to them, do you believe that I'm able to do this?

Now again, it's slightly implicit but it's clear from what follows he means giving you your sight. And so this private question elicits, draws out from them a greater articulation of faith.

Yes, we do. Yes, Lord, they say at the end of verse 28. we believe that you can give us our sight though now we are blind.

[16 : 10] And so Jesus heals them. He touches their eyes. They can't see him of course and so touching them is an element of identification with them in their blindness and he says according to your faith, words that were said earlier in the previous chapter to the Roman centurion about his servant, according to your faith let it be done to you.

Now Jesus doesn't mean there if you've got a little bit of faith then I'm going to give you a little bit of sight. You know, imagine somebody who doesn't have much faith and they end up with sort of short-sightedness.

I suppose that's an improvement. And a man who might have a lot of faith well he ends up with a lot of sight. Now Jesus is not saying that according to your faith let it be done to you but rather simply you have faith and in response you now have sight.

Now you can see. And they do. And even though Jesus tells them see that no one knows of this Jesus again dampening down a misguided enthusiasm in the followers of him trying to perhaps delay the opposition that will grow against him probably trying to slow down false expectations of what he has come to do a bit like what we saw with in earlier cases with the leper despite saying see that no one knows of this they went away and spread the news about him throughout the district.

The same expression as the end of verse 26 the news about Jesus is spreading and spreading and spreading as more and more people hear of his amazing miracles healing and teaching.

[17 : 50] Well finally we have a demoniac who was mute in verse 32. This man is brought to Jesus he doesn't come of his own volition there is no expression of faith here but that's not surprising because there never is with demoniacs.

Those who aren't possessed by demons express faith like the blind men like Jairus in the earlier episode like the leper at the beginning of chapter 8 for example their faith draws them to Jesus they express that faith in their request for healing.

Not so here. This demoniac who's mute is brought to Jesus maybe by others who have faith but he being possessed by demons will never express faith in Jesus though like the demoniacs we saw a couple of weeks ago they might recognize who Jesus is but not place their faith in him.

The word that's used to describe the fact that he is mute suggests that he is a deaf mute that is probably somebody who's never heard a sound and therefore never been able to speak somebody who was born deaf and therefore deaf and dumb.

He's brought to Jesus and when the demon and simply we're told when the demon had been cast out the one who'd been mute spoke that is his muteness is not because or is a byproduct I suppose or a result of being possessed by a demon.

[19 : 25] We ought not to take this one illustration and think that in the ancient world they ascribed all sickness and illness to some demon possession. That's clearly not the case from the many episodes we've seen in the last three weeks for example.

In fact it's quite rare that demon possession in the gospels is associated with any illness at all. Here it is. We don't know why we don't know what was the symptom of the demon possession separate from being deaf and dumb but clearly in this case there was.

There are other people who were healed of similar sorts of illnesses with no hint of demon possession. Here this man has demons cast out and as a result is able to speak.

Now think again about the immediacy of this healing. We've seen this time and again in these weeks where Jesus heals a person with fever instantly well and we saw it with the woman bleeding for 12 years instantly well.

The girl who was dead she doesn't sort of groggily wake up and lie in her bed for a few days while she recovers before getting up. She simply gets up from her bed having been dead.

[20 : 34] Here is a person who's a deaf mute presumably has never heard anybody speak before and has never spoken before. He's healed by Jesus and he speaks.

Now if a person who's never heard a sound never spoken before let's say medically had something astonishing done to them so that now they could begin to hear and ultimately speak think of all the speech therapy they would go through.

Think of all the listening they would do to people speaking the mimicking of sounds and words. Not so here. Instantly the man speaks.

That's an astonishing healing as so often is the case. That is we can't put this down to some coincidence or some medical intervention. It is a supernatural power at work both in the healing and in a sense correcting the problems due to that healing.

Instantly the dead girl walked. Instantly this man speaks presumably coherently. No wonder the people are amazed in verse 33 and say never has anything like this been seen in Israel.

[21 : 53] And we might well want to echo their statements. I remember a while ago reading the curriculum vitae of an eminent Australian for a particular reason I had this.

It was a long list of astonishing achievements. Worldwide acknowledgement in this person's area of expertise. Frequent speaker keynote speaker at international conferences and conventions.

A list of academic honours and a list of publications as long as you are. Astonishing prodigious and eminent person in this country.

And at the end you read this and you think wow this man is very impressive. Indeed he is I know him. Well that's like the crowd's reaction here in verse 33.

Never has anything like this been seen in Israel. Wow this is impressive. The astonishing preaching on the mountain, the sermon on the mount that amazed everybody with its teaching authority.

[23 : 00] Healing a leper, healing a Gentile centurion servant. At a distance what's more he didn't even go to his house. Healing Peter's mother-in-law and all sorts of others who were brought to him that evening for cures.

And all of these healings are instantaneous and immediate. He calmed a storm at sea to the astonishment of experienced fishermen. Cast out demons into swine.

He healed a lame man lowered through the roof before his eyes. Raising from the dead Jairus' daughter. Healing this long-term 12-year menstrual bleeding woman. Giving sight to the blind.

Making a deaf and dumb man speak. Wow this is impressive. Never has anything like this been seen in Israel. But even more than that.

It's not simply the wow factor. It's not simply being dazzled at the power of Jesus. Though that's clearly true. This is not just a random list that Matthew's given us.

[23 : 55] We know that there were many, many healings of Jesus. At the end of chapter four before the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew says that Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

So his fame spread throughout all Syria and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics and he cured them.

And of course on that night that he cured Peter's mother-in-law later that night at the end of the Sabbath day, they brought to him, we're told in chapter 8 verse 16, many who were possessed with demons and he cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who were sick.

Matthew selected for us key illustrations of this healing power of Jesus, not just to woo us with a wow factor, but rather to show something more profound as we've seen in recent weeks.

This is the in-breaking of the messianic age, predicted from the Old Testament. Already Matthew's quoted Isaiah 53, Jesus as the suffering servant carrying our sicknesses and illnesses, but of course implying more than that, the one who comes to die for our sins to make many righteous.

[25 : 15] We've heard here of the acclamation of Jesus as the son of David, a messianic title given to him in the statement of faith about his power to heal. We saw last week the illusions that Jesus himself uses about being the bridegroom, picking up again Old Testament expectations that Jesus is like the bridegroom of God's people who are the bride, ushering in the messianic banquet feast awaited for from the Old Testament.

Here we see in raising from the dead a young girl, echoes of some of the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, and there was a strong Old Testament expectation that Elijah would come again, the very end indeed of the Old Testament in the prophet Malachi.

But even more than that, when they were exiled in Babylon, the prophet Isaiah encouraged the people with these words about the future, then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, tick, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, tick, and the lame shall leap like a deer, well, tick, that too, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

All done. All done by Jesus. You see, Matthew leaves us in no doubt. This is not just a sort of wow factor, a sort of great powerful sequence of events.

It's more than that. Here is the Messiah, long awaited, come. In Jesus' day, there were high expectations of the Messiah because of the Roman oppression.

[26 : 52] So all those Old Testament expectations were bubbling around in Jewish society. There were various false messiahs early in the first century, it seems. So without any doubt, the evidence of what Jesus has done in bringing people who are regarded as outside society, the lepers, the women, and the Gentiles, healing Jewish and Gentile people, men and women, in all sorts and conditions, is ushering in the messianic kingdom of God.

In chapter 11, just a bit later than this episode, John the Baptist is imprisoned before his beheading. And John had heard of some of the things that Jesus was doing. And by his own disciples, he sent word to Jesus, are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another?

And Jesus replied, go and tell John what you hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.

What do you think, John? It's clear. The list of things that Jesus has done and is doing. He is the Messiah long awaited.

He is the one to come. And Jesus' words back to John the Baptist conclude with these words, blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.

[28 : 25] But sadly, maybe surprisingly, people do. A bit hard to imagine at one level, with all these acts of goodness, healing, and so on, how anyone could take offence at the astonishing things that Jesus do.

Blessed is anyone who does not take offence at me, Jesus says back to John. Why does he say that? Because people do take offence.

The end of today's passage, after this sequence of healings, the Pharisees said, by the ruler of demons, he casts out demons. That is, they say, this power of Jesus is demonic.

It is satanic. It comes from the devil. The complete opposite, of course, of what is true. How could anyone who sees all these acts of goodness and compassion, power, and mercy ascribe it to the devil?

But they do. We must not underestimate the significance and seriousness of these Pharisees saying this. Here are Jewish leaders steeped in the Old Testament.

[29 : 40] They're not simply blind, but they will not see. they say that what is demonstrably good is demonic and evil.

It's no idle, flippant remark. We saw that when Jesus healed the paralyzed man. He said to those, some of the scribes sitting there who are mumbling to themselves, why do you think evil in your heart? When Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors, we saw last week, that he rebuked those who in effect were complaining that he was doing that, saying, I am a physician, I've come for the sinner, not for those who are righteous, but now the opposition to Jesus is escalating as they ascribe to Jesus' satanic power rather than divine power.

How can this be? there is no neutral ground with Jesus. When people are confronted by Jesus, they don't simply say, well, so what?

If they're confronted with the real Jesus, they fall rather sharply into one of two camps. Either like the crowd here amazed and saying, we've never seen anything in Israel like that.

That is, here is the Messiah. Or they end up with the Pharisees. Not simply dismissing Jesus saying there must be a trick there, but dismissing him as satanic.

[31 : 03] It's an awful thing to say. It's an awful position to be in. I've seen it when I, most clearly I remember preaching at a baptism service years and years ago, not here, in a church I was helping at.

And there were many people in this church who had no Christian connection. They were just there for the ceremony. And I remember preaching and earlier in my sermon was talking about God and people were sort of listening.

But I remember noticing that as soon as I mentioned Jesus, oh, squirms, uncomfortable, get out the hanky, cough, turn to somebody else, get up, walk out, some people did.

It's an amazing reaction. And I still see it. You still see it in society. People are happy to talk in a sort of abstract sort of level. evil. But for many, Jesus is a swear word, as though he's satanic and evil.

How can these Pharisees do this? When something else is your God, then Jesus confronts you, the very core of your being.

[32 : 09] For the Pharisees, their gods were things like, I guess, their institutional power and structure, their prestige, their pride, and no doubt, too, their self-righteousness.

Confrontation with Jesus rocks them to their heart. They don't like it. Nobody likes their gods, their idols, their things of treasure in their heart being challenged by something else.

Their blindness is willful. And sadly, their way of rejecting Jesus is to say that actually what is good is evil.

But that's actually the case of our world, which rejoices in evil if it does not accept Jesus Christ. Paul's picture of the pagan world at the beginning of Romans, and there are various other similar passages like that, say much the same sort of thing.

They love evil and hate what is good. And here we see it on the lips of these Pharisees. Blinded by self-righteousness, they denounce Jesus as diabolical.

[33 : 24] The idolatry of anything when it's challenged by Jesus means one of two things. The idols go and Jesus takes its place.

Or sadly, so often, the rejection of Jesus absolutely and totally, willfully, blindly, and even the ascription that he is evil, not good.

Beware the leaven of the Pharisees. Beware blinding self-righteousness that cuts Jesus out of your life. But rather, come to Jesus, the physician of our souls.

Even with little faith, even with some superstitious faith, but faith that is centered in Jesus, and find salvation like we've seen here.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin. He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me.

[34 : 28] He speaks and listening to his voice, new life the dead receive. And the mournful broken hearts rejoice, and the humble poor believe. Hear him, you deaf.

His praise, you dumb. your loosened tongues employ. And you blind now see your saviour come and leap, you lame, for joy. Jesus, the name that charms our fears and bids our sorrows cease.

This music in the sinner's ears is life and health and peace. continuesack, and Myths.

Now, you will find an other who will be ■■■■■■ whether