

Get Up & Walk: Faith & Healing

Memory Text: “For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?” (Matthew 9:5)

Setting The Stage: Everyone dreads something. Whether these fears are rational or a product of some long buried trauma can vary from person to person. Whatever the root cause, many people all over the world experience the same fear for various reasons. Year-to-year the exact percentages can fluctuate, but what people dread rarely does: Public Speaking; Heights; Going to the dentist; Flying; Spiders and insects; Enclosed Spaces; Mice; Dogs; Thunder and Lightning. What do you dread that wasn't on the list?

I haven't mentioned death, but that is something most people fear as well. Whether it be the act itself or anything associated with it – graveyards, funeral homes, funerals, etc. – it's something we have a hard time getting use to. We dread the death of a family member or loved one.

If God were to make a list of what He dreads the most, it would certainly deal with the loss of either our family's or our own eternal life. Does that mean He doesn't have a concern for our temporal wellbeing? He surely is concerned. We see Jesus healing all manner of sickness and disease, yeah, even raising the dead. But with God death is not final. However, dealing with eternity, the stakes are a lot higher.

Sunday – Touching The Untouchable

Matthew 8:1-4; Psalm 86:5

Matthew 8:1-4. This event likely occurred during Christ's first tour of Galilee as Mark records it (Mark 1:40-45). The account is also mentioned in Luke 5:12-16, but Mark's account is more detailed. Jesus cured other lepers (Matt. 26:6 – Simon; Luke 7:22 – Christ's statement to John; 17:12-14 – 10 lepers) and sent out His disciples to do the same (Luke 10:8)

Hanson's disease (leprosy) is a malady that acts as an anesthetic, numbing the pain cells of feet, hands, ears, nose, and eyes. For thousands of years people considered leprosy to be highly contagious. Largely through Dr. Paul Brand's research, we have come to know that of all infectious diseases Hanson's is probably the least contagious and that in ninety-nine percent of the cases HD only numbs the extremities.

Dreaded disease. The thought of contracting the disease filled the bravest person with fear. Unfortunately among the Jews it was regarded as a judgment on account of sin, and hence it was called the “stroke” or “the finger of God.” Like someone

already dead he was shut out from contact with society. Whatever he touched was unclean. His breath polluted the air.

Anyone who was suspected of having this disease needed to present him/herself to the priests, who were to examine and decide each case. If pronounced a leper, he was isolated from family, cut off from the congregation of Israel, and was doomed to associate with those only who were similarly afflicted. The law was inflexible in its requirements. Even kings and rulers were not exempt. A monarch who was attacked by this disease was to lay down his scepter and flee from society.

Touched him. Everyone needs to be touched, held, even hugged. Someone suggested to really feel great each day you need to receive 15 hugs from varying people. I wouldn't suggest finding a stranger to get your quota for the day. But this man received nothing, not even a touch.

Will Jesus turn anyone aside who needs His grace, who wants to be clean from sin? Will we be received of Him, even if it is for the third, fourth, fifth time? The record goes on to say, "...saying, 'I will. Be thou clean.'" v. 42: "And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed."

"The work of Christ in cleansing the leper from this terrible disease is an illustration of His work of cleansing the soul from sin." (Desire of Ages, p. 266) The man who came to Jesus was "full of leprosy." It permeated his whole body. And so does sin. It is deep-rooted, deadly, and impossible to be cleansed by us. But Jesus came into this world as a man, One undefiled by sin, and freely offers life-giving power to make a person whole.

Galatians 1:4: "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father."

1 John 5:14, 15: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."

Psalms 86:5: "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

Know today you'll never be shunned by Christ if you come to Him needing cleansing. Know today that if you have fallen in a heap, you're dirty, filthy, and unclean, that it is His pleasure to pick you up, wash you off, and clean you up. It's not beneath Christ to make you whole. You've got to know that today.

Monday – The Roman & The Messiah

Matthew 8:5-13; 3:9, 10

Matthew 8:5-9, 13 (cp. Luke 7:1-10). Account occurred after the giving of the

Sermon on the Mount. “Capernaum” – a city in Galilee on the north rim of the Sea of Galilee. It was a chief Jewish center of the region. Being situated on one of the main highways from Damascus, with Tyre and Sidon on the north, Jerusalem on the south, and the Mediterranean on the West, Capernaum became an important toll station and a strategic location from which news of the teachings and ministry of Jesus would spread rapidly throughout Galilee and beyond. The healing of the nobleman’s son the winter before had already kindled a light in Capernaum.

“Centurion” – a captain of a group in the Roman army called a century, a number which varied between 50 to 100. This particular centurion was probably in charge of a company of soldiers on police duty for Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

Contradiction between accounts? The apparent differences between Matthew and Luke’s account occurs in Luke 7:3. Luke records sending two delegations by the centurion – “elders” and by “friends” – whereas Matthew mentions neither. Matthew spoke only of the centurion himself coming to see Jesus. It is likely that Matthew is keeping mind that because the delegations spoke for the centurion he simplifies his count by presenting the words of the messengers on behalf of the centurion as if the centurion himself had spoken them. Today, as, in times past, someone in authority is commonly said to do certain things when, in fact, the actual work is done by his subordinates (think President of USA). Pilate is said to have flogged Jesus, when, in fact, his soldiers did it (John 19:1).

This story reveals four truths:

1. The centurion, carrying the seal of the Caesar in Capernaum, showed that power and authority must never blind one’s eyes to the value and dignity of a human being, even if that person is a bonded slave. Roman law considered a slave no better than a workman’s tool, to be thrown away when no longer usable, but this centurion transcended such hideous thinking.
2. Divine grace was available to the centurion and the servant – both Gentiles in Jewish culture, barely a step above the leper. The door to Jesus is always open and never shut to anyone (Isis and politicians). What the world in sin excludes, is included in the new world Jesus creates.
3. A feeling of unworthiness before divine power is the key to experiencing that power in your life.
4. The power of Jesus, then and now, is to be realized not in the physical presence of Jesus but by faith in His word.

What stern warning is given to those who are greatly privileged in the following words?

Matthew 3:9, 10: “And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

Matthew 8:10- 12: “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). Name, title, and nationality don't matter in God's eyes. Profession is worthless without corresponding action.

Tuesday – Demons & Pigs

Matthew 8:23-34; John 3:19

Matthew 8:23-27. After a long day of teaching, when evening approached, Jesus suggested that He and His disciples go to the less inhabited opposite shore. Partway into the journey a fierce storm broke upon the sea. The life of everyone on the boat was at risk, yet Jesus' exhausted from the day slept through the ordeal; that is until He was called upon to help. Jesus spoke just three words and the storm subsided. Everyone was overwhelmed with awe. They couldn't believe the power this Man had over nature. He has control over the storms of your life as well.

Matthew 8:28-34. Matthew speaks of two men possessed by demons, whereas Mark and Luke speak of one. There is no contradiction because where there is two there is at least one. But lets not miss the point of the story and that is that someone who was demon possessed was delivered by Jesus, testifying to His power over evil. He has power over any evil in your life as well.

The whole city came out and begged Jesus to leave town. That was a response from the Gentiles. John states the case of Jesus even more powerfully: “He came unto His own and His own received him not.” (John 1:11) Why is Jesus treated this way? He disturbs our peace, challenges our comforts, and takes what we consider normal and holds it up to truth.

“Where he is, sin cannot claim a seat; injustice cannot wear a face; self-centered domination must yield to brotherhood; eyes blinded by the cataracts of color, race, caste, or gender must undergo cathartic surgery; and love, mercy, and justice must mark every contour of human life. Christ is the Great Disturber.”

John 3:19: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Wednesday – “Get Up & Walk!”

Matthew 9:1-8; Psalm 103:2, 3

Matthew 9:1-8 (cp. Mark 2:1-12). Here was someone who desired spiritual healing

more than physical healing. Affliction had given him time for reflection, and he had come to realize that his own sins were responsible for his suffering. It was to these sins, which weighed so heavily upon his mind, to which Jesus referred. He was physically helpless and spiritually hopeless, until he presented his case to Jesus, Who offered both help and hope.

Healing of the body without healing of the soul could result only in a repetition of the course the man had taken that brought on the disease. Therefore Christ, who gave the man a new body, first provided him with a new heart. Jesus offered a miracle that all could see as evidence of the greater miracle that they could not see.

1 John 3:8: “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

John 10:10: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Psalm 103:2, 3: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;”

Thursday – Letting The Dead Bury The Dead

Matthew 8:18-22;

Matthew 8:18-22. These words describe some of the privations of discipleship. Jesus wants us to count the cost and know what it means to follow Him.

“Scribe” – he applied to be a full-time disciple. Probably was a part-time follower, and had seen and heard enough to create in his heart a longing to be with Jesus all of the time. But it seems he was a fickle individual who perhaps moved more from impulse than from principle. Discipleship calls for steadiness of purpose and patience in the face of difficulty and disappointment.

“Another” – perhaps this individual had been a part-time disciple and wanted to be in full-time association with Jesus as well. Unlike the scribe who moved from impulse, it appears this man was slow and prone to procrastination. In all likelihood the father was enjoying relatively good health and the time of death unknown. If this is the case, then Jesus’ words should be taken figuratively not literally. Probably this would-be follower’s response was an excuse to delay the time it would be necessary to forsake all and follow Jesus. If the father were dead, it is unlikely Jesus would have ordered the neglect of one of the most sacred duties devolving upon a son.

This man is over caution as the previous one was overenthusiastic. He said to Jesus, “I would like to follow you but I can’t do that while my father is alive.” In reply, Christ said to him, “I fully recognize your obligation to your parents; nevertheless,

your obligation to the kingdom of God takes precedence over that.” The claims of the gospel transcend those of family ties – not that the latter are relaxed in the least, but rather that they’re not to be used to make an excuse for failing to heed Christ’s call to service.

Summary: The power and authority of Jesus as the Messiah were used to serve and uplift humanity. His kingdom was inclusive. Whoever came to Him was embraced by His love and offered His saving grace. The miracles Christ performed in the healing of the sick serve as a powerful reminder to us of the greatest miracle Jesus wishes to perform in each of our lives, and that is giving us a new heart. More than good health is Jesus desire for us. He wants us to be saved for eternity. Won’t you accept His offer of salvation again today?