

Who can Jesus heal?

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[0 : 00] See, every now and then, we seem to hear about a book on how someone miraculously recovered from a serious disease or third-stage cancer.

If you walk into MPH and browse the Christian slash religion section, there's a decent chance you'll find a testimony on how a missionary visited a village in an underdeveloped country, purged the demons, and healed the sickness.

Now, let's set aside the authenticity of these stories for now. I mean, after all, there is no way definitively for us to prove that they are fake.

And just consider why these books are there on the shelves in the first place. The purpose of non-fiction books, believe it or not, isn't so much to present objective truth, but to entertain.

See, the point of writing these faith encounters is to get you interested enough so you will invest and purchase it.

[1 : 07] Publishers want to know that they can make a profit. And of course they will, since everybody enjoys reading stories on how a situation went from bad to good.

We identify with the underdog. We love cheering on someone and seeing them overcome the obstacles of faith, obstacles that life throws at them, even more if it was done so with faith in God. However, is God just a superhero who saves those who are desperate? Is Jesus only a doctor who, by the snap of his fingers, heals our illness?

Is the Messiah merely a messenger of God who has come to relieve people of their pain? See, last week in Luke, we saw Jesus gathering his first disciples.

Specifically, we saw Simon initially turning down Jesus' offer to join him because he saw himself as too sinful and too unworthy. Yet Jesus called Simon and the disciples nonetheless, not because he needs them, but because they need him.

[2 : 23] This morning, we'll see Jesus continuing in Galilee and carrying out two miracles of healing. And throughout the whole episode, one question pops up at the back of people's mind.

Just who is Jesus really? Particularly, what kind of healing does Jesus bring? Now, we're going to answer these questions in two parts.

The first, Jesus makes the unclean pure. And second, Jesus makes the flawed one whole. Jesus makes the unclean pure.

Having called his first disciples Simon, James, and John, Jesus and his company journeys into an unnamed city in Galilee. Now, although not everybody knew Jesus at this point, quite a few people have already heard news about how this rabbi helped Simon hurl in the biggest catch of his life.

So one afternoon, Jesus and his disciples were shopping around the market when a fully covered man approached them. Immediately, the disciples put their hand in front of Jesus and tried to protect him from this stranger.

[3 : 47] In those days, you wouldn't dress the way this man did if you didn't have one of the most contagious diseases known to men, leprosy.

Leprosy was a broad term for a series of skin diseases that created swollen areas on the skin and in some cases even attacked the nerves. And those with leprosy were outcasts.

They had to practice. No. It's fair to say that they were forced to do social distancing way before you and me. Not because people just wanted to be mean, but because of how easily the disease can spread.

So Moses sets out in Leviticus 14 specific regulations for these patients to cover and isolate themselves. One can only imagine what the reaction was like when the stranger finally rolled out his sleeves.

Gasp. Screams. Exclamation. Get away from us. Some took a step backward.

[5 : 05] Others ordered their kids to stand behind them. Yet the man was not to be deterred. He bows before Jesus, go on to his knees and says, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Notice he does not doubt whether Jesus has the capacity or ability to heal. He focuses instead on Jesus' intention.

If you are willing, you can make me clean. The leper believes that as long as Jesus desires, he will not only be healed, but also be clean.

And brothers and sisters, here we have a man who has long known isolation. A man who has not only faced physical turmoil, but also the pain of social rejection.

If you will, suggest that this man does not actually know what Jesus will do, yet he puts his entire life in the hands of Christ only for a chance to be cleansed.

[6 : 20] Tensions rose. What would this rabbi do? Would he dismiss someone in need? Or would he risk making himself unclean by contacting a leper?

What Jesus does next might come as a surprise to many of us. He didn't pray for the leper, from afar. He didn't circle seven rounds at the same spot and yell, Be healed!

Friends, Jesus stretches out his hand. And what does he do? He touches the leper. In suffering, Jesus comes close and touches us, particularly in the places of pain.

He tells the man, I am willing. Be clean. Be clean. Immediately, the leprosy left the man. His scars were patched.

His skin was smoothed. All of the witnesses were startled. Just who is this man really? And before they could say a thing, Jesus orders now the now fully recovered man, don't tell anyone.

[7 : 37] But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing as a testimony to them. So first, he is to be silent so people don't popularize Jesus and his healing ministry and set him up as the newest and most exciting thing in town.

Jesus commands the man to do only what is necessary, show himself to the priest because officially, this person is still a leper. His name is not off the leper list yet.

He is not allowed to mix around with the public until he is declared clean by the priest, which, according to the Old Testament, can take up to a week. You see, the priest has to take two births. Killing one while dipping the second in the blood of the first before releasing it. Next, the priest sprinkles the blood of the sacrificed bird seven times on the leper.

And finally, on the eighth day, there will be a sacrifice of either two lambs or, for the poor, a lamb and two does. So the entire process is to represent the cleansing and removal of sin.

[8 : 57] Now, you might be thinking, if the leper is already clean, what's the point of sticking to the process? You know, why go through the trouble if he's already recovered?

Well, I'm glad you asked because Jesus answers it immediately. offer the sacrifice as a testimony to them.

Offer the sacrifice as a testimony to them. In other words, the purpose of the sacrifice is to show the religious leaders of Israel that God has come and he is at work in Jesus.

The Messiah is here to usher an era of healing and renewal among his people. Yet, despite Jesus' commands, news about a preacher who teaches with authority and heals with power spread all over Judea and Jerusalem.

Elsewhere in Mark, we are told that from this point on, the people who are trying to see Jesus is so great that he can no longer enter the city but minister in the smaller towns in the countryside.

[10 : 16] So, understanding that his ministry has officially gone public, Jesus withdraws to a quiet place to pray. He seeks God knowing that from here on out, whatever he does, whatever he teaches, will face the scrutiny of the Roman officials and the religious leaders.

conflict, persecution, and trial are soon to come. So, who is Jesus really?

In these short verses, we see Jesus as the compassionate one. His heart breaks for those who are in need. He reaches out and touches the people who are hurting.

but Jesus is not just here to relieve us of our physical discomfort. The whole passage centers on the idea of being clean.

Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. I am willing, be clean. friends, no matter who you are, no matter what kind of package, what kind of baggage, what kind of pain you carry with you, Jesus is here to touch you and make you pure.

[11 : 43] He has come to declare that by Him and through Him, you can be washed as white as snow. And what's more, contact with Jesus restores all areas of our lives.

By His touch, Jesus reintegrates the leper back to His community. He now has a job, friends, and He can't stop talking about Jesus.

The gospel changes everything. The good news shapes the way we live. Number two, Jesus makes the flawed one whole.

Now one afternoon, Jesus was teaching somewhere in Capernaum. Now the crowd on this day was quite diverse. There were the usual poor and sick people, but for the first time in the whole book, the Pharisees and teachers of the law came all the way from Jerusalem.

What does this mean? Well, news about this new preacher had already reached the highest level of Judaism.

[12 : 59] Their leaders are starting to take an interest in Jesus. Now the Pharisees are a group that need no introduction. In short, these people have one goal in mind, to keep Israel faithful to the teachings of Moses.

Moses. They're your straight-A students who remember every single detail that's written in the law of Moses. And as religious leaders, one of their roles is to provide answers and directions on issues that are perhaps not directly written in the law.

Their role is to contextualize age-old teachings and interpret on behalf of the people ways to practice their faith in a new setting. That sounds very similar to what I am doing.

But what this kind of authority gives them, though, are opportunities to add their own rules or make their own changes to the script. So because of this, no one really likes the Pharisee.

If you try to argue with them, they'll tell you they have superior insight as students of the Torah.

Nonetheless, they continue to hold an important place in the functioning of the society.

[14 : 17] Thus, the stage is set. Jesus is teaching, the Pharisees are present, and power has come upon Jesus to heal and make great claims.

An hour in, the place where Jesus was teaching was getting more and more crowded. Some of the people who lived hours away were just arriving, and the entrance was blocked and the streets were full.

Everybody wanted a chance to get a glance at this new teacher and hear what he's really about.

Now, out of nowhere, there came a group of men walking towards the house, four men in particular, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed.

Now, they most likely approached the disciples and said, hey, bro, is there any way for us to get our friend in? He really needs help. Unfortunately, it was simply too crowded for anyone to enter the house, well, at least in a normal way.

You see, there was still one entrance. one thing about the typical house in Palestine was that they had two floors, and steps up to the roof lay in the open at the side of the house.

[15 : 41] And their roof wasn't anything too concrete either. It's usually just a few pieces of wooden beam on top of stone walls with a layer of mud on top.

So seeing that as their way into the house, these men carried their friend up the stairs and began cutting through the roof. Bit by bit, they started to clear and open the way.

Down the stairs, no one noticed. Jesus kept on teaching and the people kept on listening.

Suddenly, the roof cracked open and the men lowered their friend into the house.

And now, a disabled man sits right before Jesus. What would the Lord do?

How would the paralytic and his friends feel? What is the crowd thinking? Jesus' response catches people off guard.

[16 : 45] This time around, he doesn't heal first. Instead, he is moved by the extent to which these men want to bring their friend before him. For the first time in the whole book, Luke uses the word pistis, faith.

Jesus was moved by their faith. When Jesus saw their faith, because the paralytic and his friends, they strongly believe that Jesus can provide graciously to meet their friend's need.

God So, he looks at the paralyzed man and says, friend, your sins are forgiven. In case you missed it, this is quite an outrageous statement.

No, he is not claiming that the guy is not able to walk because he committed a specific sin and that God judged him so that he is disabled. See, the point of this quote is not the paralytic, but Jesus himself.

Jesus wants everybody to know that he's not just here to heal people from this sickness. The Messiah is here to forgive sins.

[18 : 05] Jesus, from this point on, is gradually revealing what his ministry is truly about. to reconcile sinners back into a covenant relationship with God.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law are stunned. See, unlike the rest of the crowd, this group of trained scholars realize that Jesus is making a significant claim.

They begin to think to themselves, how dare this guy violate God's majesty? How could he profess to do what only God can do? Actually, we don't even know which school this guy graduated from. It's ridiculous enough that he's out here healing people, but who is he to say that he can forgive sins? Now, aware of the speculations, Jesus responds, why are you thinking these things in your heart?

Jesus goes on the offense. He calls them out and he challenges them directly by asking them why should they question him. Now, what he says next might be quite confusing, which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up and walk.

[19 : 33] Now, what does Jesus mean by this? is actually quite straightforward. If you wanted to fake something, it is actually harder to fake a healing.

Since we can all tell if a person is healed or not, in this case, it is actually easier to fake forgiveness of sins, since I can't look at you and say your sins are not forgiven.

There is no way to objectively prove that what Jesus is saying is false. So, he is purposely making a strong claim because he has confidence in his authority derived from the Lord.

Here is a man who is doing just that which is difficult. He risks his reputation and claims that a man's sins are healed.

So, the issue at stake is this. Is Jesus making a false statement? Does his declaration of forgiveness have God's word and power behind it?

[20 : 45] Jesus addresses the question right away. But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

Jesus reveals himself to be the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy given a long time ago by the prophet Daniel. According to Daniel 7, God will give a Son of Man authority, glory, and sovereign power such that all nations and peoples of every language worship him.

Using the title Son of Man, Jesus is claiming that he is a fulfillment of the prophecy. He is the agent of the salvation who has been sent by God to redeem people from their sins.

He is Messiah who has come to deliver this world not just from bodily suffering but more importantly from their lifelong alienation with God.

Jesus turns to the paralytic and gives him three commands. Get up, take the mat, and go home. As with the leper, the healing happens immediately.

[22 : 04] Before everyone's eyes, the man rises, collects his bed, and walks out of the house singing songs of praise. Cheers and applause echoed through the street.

Even the crowd senses their privilege. We have seen remarkable things today. The presence of God is here with us. Now, although they may not have understood everything, the people could see that something special was happening.

Thus, the story of Jesus' two healing accounts ends. At this point of the narrative, we learn yet something new about who Jesus is.

We already know from the earlier chapters of Luke that he is a gifted preacher who conducts miracles. We also saw that he calls people to follow him and tells them to be fishers of men.

In today's passage, we see that there is more depth and meaning behind Jesus' healing. See, previously when he healed the demon-possessed men and Simon's mother-in-law who had a high fever, Jesus merely spoke words and rebuked the demons and the sickness.

[23 : 25] here, Jesus touches a social outcast. He touches an infectious man.

Friends, Christ is not afraid to get his hands dirty. The holy and untainted one has come to live among filthy sinners, you and me, and restore order, peace, and security to our lives.

The first thing we learn about Jesus is that he has come to make the unclean pure, that he is not only concerned about our physical well-being, that he is more than just a popular faith guru or spiritual doctor.

Jesus is the Son of Man, the Messiah, God's chosen servant, who has come to forgive our sins. forgiveness. Yet, Jesus will go on to show that forgiveness is not as simple as God declaring so.

See, if you borrowed my car and got into an accident, you can feel completely sorry about your sin. And I can not only say I forgive you, but also sincerely mean it in my heart.

[24 : 45] Yet, it doesn't change the fact that someone still has to pay the money to get the car up and running again. Forgiveness always comes with price.

And Jesus has come to bear the very price of our forgiveness. He became the two birds, the lamb of sacrifice, so that all who are dirty can make clean.

Jesus bore shame and rejection from the world, so all outcasts from God's kingdom can be reinstated and have their membership renewed.

Jesus, the Son of Man, who enjoyed all power, glory, and majesty, emptied himself by coming down to earth and giving his life so you and I can receive ultimate love and eternal security from the Father.

So, brothers and sisters, what is stopping you from responding to Jesus' healing? What is hindering you from receiving Jesus' touch?

[26 : 08] Perhaps some of you feel that you're too dirty. you know from the bottom of your heart all the sinful thoughts you've had, all the hurtful words you've said, and all the destructive actions you've done.

Every day you see yourself falling back into the same patterns of sin and you say to yourself, nothing can heal me. Even God cannot help me.

You believe you will never earn God's love. You feel extremely good about yourself on days where you are spiritual.

But when you stumble, you're tempted to believe that God would disown you that very moment. Maybe some of you are like the teachers of the law.

You pride yourself in following the rules. You're educated. you're accomplished. You're respected by your peers. You disdain those who break social norms and live their lives differently than the way you've been taught, than the way you're used to.

[27 : 22] You feel proud to have met the expectations of your parents, your spouse, your children, your pastor. And when the lows of life inevitably strike you, you believe you can get yourself back up, follow the right rules, read the right books, practice the habits to calm the chaos and restore order to your life.

Friends, whether you identify with the first group or the second, both are lost. The one who says God cannot heal me despises God.

The one who says I can heal myself too rejects God. So what then is the way out? To quote a famous preacher, this is the good news of the gospel.

I am more sinful and flawed than I ever dare believe. Yet at the same time, I am more loved and accepted in Jesus than I ever dare hope.

I am more sinful and flawed than I ever dare believe. Yet at the same time, I am more loved and accepted in Jesus than I ever their hope. The leper and the paralytic share one thing in common. They both sense your need for healing. They saw their own imperfections and did everything to reach Jesus. And when they found him, they bowed before the Son of God and sought his salvation.

[29 : 13] So will you come before Jesus? Will you submit your shortcomings before the cross and center your life on your Savior? I pray that the words of the ancient hymn may ring true this morning.

I will arise and go to Jesus. He will embrace me in his arms, in the arms of my dear Savior.

Oh, there are 10,000 charms. Let's pray. Father God, we are dirty people, flawed, and weak. And words of all, Lord, we try to cover our imperfections with the things we wear, the things we do, the words we say, all to guard our insecurities. And Lord, at times we don't even sense the need to receive your touch and receive your healing. At times we're stubborn. We think to ourselves, we're not that bad.

We can fix this. Just give us time. But Lord, you didn't wait for us to fix ourselves. You came holy and untainted to live among the dirty and impure. You gave yourself so you can touch us, you can heal us, and restore order to our lives. Remind us, Lord, for our continual need of the gospel, to be renewed day by day, to find courage and strength, knowing that, Lord, we are your precious child, the one who you have chosen since the beginning of time, the one who you have given yourself and rise again to heal and restore us and give us a new life in you. Pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.