

The Passion and Power of Jesus

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- [0 : 0 0] Over the 21 years of my ministry among you, I have preached from this passage more than any other of the Bible. I've preached it more than John 3.16.
- I've preached it more than Psalm 23. I've done it because although the Bible contains fabulously more than this, it reveals the heart, the mind, and the power of Jesus I have come to know better and love more over the 37 years of my Christian life.
- Some years ago, the American Christian author Philip Yancey wrote a book entitled, The Jesus I Never Knew. Do you know this Jesus for yourself?
- The Jesus who, having stretched out his hand to touch this desperate leper, said to him, I am willing. Be clean. If you do not yet know him, on his behalf, I invite you today to experience the loving heart and the powerful touch of Jesus.
- Well, an unclean leper came to Jesus begging him, saying, If you will or if you're willing, you can make me clean. What shall Jesus do with this poor, desperate man?
- [1 : 1 7] What shall he do with this untouchable man upon whom society has turned its back? We read, Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I am willing. Be clean.
- Such passionate words, such powerful words coming from the mouth of a Jesus whose heart beats with love for the unlovable and whose voice sounds with power toward the powerless.
- In this passage, especially there in verse 41, we see two things about the Jesus who perhaps you have not yet known. First, the passion of Jesus, and second, the power of Jesus.
- You can know this Jesus for yourself today if you will but call out to him saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. First of all then, we see the passion of Jesus.
- The passion of Jesus. Historically, Jesus was often portrayed as a rather stoic figure, unfeeling and made up almost of pure brain. Nothing could be further from the truth.
- [2 : 3 1] He had a very rich emotional life. To be a human being is to have a rich emotional life full of ups and downs. And in this verse, we glimpse these powerful emotions.
- Having seen the man, having heard his words, moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said, I am willing. Be clean.
- We learn many things from these words, not least of which is this. Jesus was a deeply passionate man, very far from the stoic, unfeeling figure we so often think him to be.
- It's that pity of his heart. It's that stretching out of his hand. But especially these two words which reveal to us the most divinely human of passions.
- He says, I will or I am willing. Have you ever thought that though you know you need Jesus, that he won't want you?
- [3 : 3 7] Well, this passage shows us a Jesus who is far more willing to meet our need than we are to ask him to help us in our need. A Jesus who wants us to be his.

We see two things from this display of Jesus' passion here. First, it's a passion moved by need. And then it's a passion moved by nature.

It's a passion, first of all, moved by need. By need. Now we know that in Jesus' time, lepers were treated as the untouchables of society. They were excluded.

They were forced to live either alone or in leper colonies. They were thought of not just as physically unclean, but also as spiritually unclean because in the minds of the people, the leper must have done really bad things to have been punished by God with leprosy.

So here was a man who lived with loneliness, pain, and grief, suffering, guilt, and shame. He wasn't one of the great and good of society.

[4 : 45] He had no influence. He had no status in society. He was hated. No one dared come near him for fear that they might contract his illness. At the beginning of the COVID pandemic, everyone was afraid that someone might cough near them.

Who knows that person might give us the dreaded virus? And everyone avoided this poor man. He was forced to live alone or with those who shared his morbid, depressing, painful lifestyle.

Jesus would, in many people's minds, have nothing to do with this man. After all, they thought he was being punished for his sins. Why would a religious teacher have anything to do with an unclean sinner like this man?

When he asked Jesus if you were willing, most people would have expected Jesus to say, I am not willing. God has punished you for your sin by giving you leprosy.

I am not going to go against God's judgment. But he didn't. Jesus never does what we expect him to do. He always breaks human cultural codes of conduct.

[5 : 58] We read rather, I am willing. I am willing. Jesus knew full well this man's leprosy was not a punishment from God any more than getting a cold is a punishment from God.

We read rather, he said, I am willing. He was willing because, we read, he was moved with pity. Here then, we see the first great passion of Jesus' heart, pity for a man in need.

Now, Mark wrote this gospel under the guidance of the apostle Peter. Mark wasn't there that day when Jesus healed the leper, but Peter was. Peter was standing beside Jesus.

Peter could see the compassion in Jesus' eyes and he could tell that Jesus was deeply affected by this man's desperate condition. There are three Greek words Mark could have used which we translate by the English word pity.

The word he uses is the most powerful. There's no direct English translation. The closest would be gut punched, gut punched.

[7 : 14] Jesus' internal organs were moved within him at the sight and sound of this poor man. There's a scene in the film Schindler's List where Oscar Schindler is seated on a horse looking over the burning corpses of thousands of Jews.

And you can tell by the brilliant acting of Liam Neeson that Schindler is deeply distressed by what he sees. It's a similar idea here. Jesus is gut punched by the intense suffering of this leper and it's that pity that moves him to say I am willing.

I'm always willing. When confronted by human suffering what is Jesus' reaction? Do we think he stands by stoically watching as human beings made in the image of God and precious to him suffer in their loneliness, pain, and grief?

Or is his holy heart moved by our need and the misery of the ruin of sin? He sees beneath our guilt and our pain our loneliness and shame because he sees beneath the surface and straight into our hearts.

compare him to the leaders of the other world religions, the gods who care nothing for our sufferings, the gods who deny the existence of suffering.

- [8 : 44] Jesus stands head and shoulders above them all not just in his capacity to sympathize with us in our sufferings but to fully enter into our sufferings.
- He is moved with pity and compassion. He sees you today crying out for meaning, for forgiveness, and for peace.
- He hears your nighttime tears and your heartfelt pleas for help. However unlovable and how untouchable you feel yourself to be, Jesus loves you and though no one else can or wants to, he can touch even the most diseased of hearts.
- Make no mistake, he is willing, he always has been and always will be. Others may lack the capacity to sympathize. After all, even the biggest hearted human being has a limit but Jesus knows no limitations we may feel so ashamed today that we dare not look into a mirror for fear of the shadow of the person looking back at you.
- We may feel so broken by life and betrayed by others that we cannot trust anyone ever again and ourselves least of all. We may have exhausted the capacity of our friends to listen and sympathize with our constant groaning but Jesus isn't ashamed of us.
- [10 : 16] He can always be trusted and his sympathy is boundless. He is willing. Some in the hyper-Calvinistic tradition are forever questioning God's will.
- They blame their lack of faith on God not willing their salvation. But the secret will of God is not for us to know. What is for us to know is the declared will of God and here in black and white Jesus declares to all those in need who come to him for healing and salvation I am willing.
- We do not hide our lack of willing behind theology. If we are not Christians today it is not because of any lack of willing on the part of God. The fault lies entirely with us for not coming to him with our need.
- The passion of Jesus this gut punched pity is declared to us in print in Mark 1 41. The longer we go on in our Christian faith the more passionately willing we find the Lord Jesus to be.
- It is one reason is it not why though we may feel so very unlovable we know that he loves us. Passion moved by need.
- [11 : 45] Passion also moved by nature. Passion moved by nature. God does not feel emotions in the same way we do. And yet to say that he does not sympathize with us in our suffering is wrong headed.
- Jesus as we learn from the Bible is God in the flesh the supreme revelation of what God is like and never a person had a richer emotional life than he did.
- But had we only the pages of the Old Testament we would find that Jesus' passion for the suffering is entirely consistent with the God revealed there.
- During the distressing days of the judges when the people of Israel were oppressed by their enemies we read in Judges 2 verse 18 that the Lord was moved to pity because of their groaning.
- In Psalm 72 verse 13 we learn the Lord has pity on the weak and the needy. Again from the Psalms in Psalm 102 verse 13 we read you will arise and have pity yet on Zion.
- [12 : 58] Just one more in Hosea chapter 11 upon seeing the suffering of his people God says my compassion grows weak grows warm and tender.
- The picture of the God the Old Testament paints fits perfectly the portrait of Jesus in the new. The gut punched pity Jesus felt for this suffering leper is exactly what we would expect from the God of the Old Testament the Jewish leaders thought that God was punishing this leper but Jesus revealing the warm heart of God is filled with compassion for him.

Jesus' passion moved by nature not merely his nature as the perfect human being with a rich emotional life but his nature as the one true and living God of heaven and earth.

Many people struggle to see what separates Christianity from all the other religions in the world. They lump them all together as one.

The answer is this lots of things not the least of which is our God's capacity for pity and compassion.

[14 : 25] Isn't this a God we can love and worship? a God who deserves our love and worship because he has entered into our suffering and into our pain. One last thing about the passion of God for us and his willingness to meet us in our need.

In Luke 13 34 as Jesus looks out over the city of Jerusalem filled with its rebellion and unfaithfulness he reveals the passion of his heart for them.

He says how often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings but you were not willing.

Let us be under no illusion as to the willingness of God to meet us in our suffering. He is willing. But then you say I've done the most horrible of things in my life.

I've committed every sin in the book. Surely God will not want me today. Surely I can't come to him. On the authority of this verse I say to you God is willing.

[15 : 37] Or you say but this is the first time I've ever heard anything like this. I've always believed in a God of anger justice and wrath. Surely having lived so far away from him for so very long he won't want me now.

Again on the authority of this verse God says to you today I am willing or maybe you say I have nothing to offer God today.

I am so weak and pathetic I have no talents I would just be a drain to him. Once more in the authority of this verse God says to you I am willing.

The only qualification we need to fulfill the requirements to be healed and restored by God is that we are aware of our suffering and need and come to him. Those fool of themselves and their abilities need not apply they are not qualified.

It is the lepers the outcasts those who know their need who are qualified to partake of Jesus willing. Can you not see the love and passion in the eyes of Jesus even as Peter saw it when he looks into your heart today he says to you in earnest I am willing whoever you are I am willing if any here are not Christians today it is because they are unwilling not Jesus the question is then are you willing for Jesus to do a work in you because he most definitely is the passion of Jesus and then secondly the power of Jesus the power of Jesus historically one section of the church has portrayed Jesus as stoic and unfeeling but another section has portrayed him as being the helpless victim of the malice of mankind nothing could be further from the truth filled with the

[17 : 44] Holy Spirit Jesus was the most powerful man to have ever lived he did not use his power to control people but to set them free he did not use his power to dominate people but through him to realize their full potential as human beings he did not use his power to take life he used his power to give life that's why Christians love him as they do for in him is perfect power and perfect passion combined Jesus does not merely say I am willing to this poor man we might also be willing to relieve the suffering of humanity but we are powerless so to do but Jesus goes further he says I am willing be clean the word leprosy as used in the New Testament covers a range of diseases not just what we call leprosy or Hansen's disease it refers to a condition to any condition which was a disease of the skin and caused disfigurement of which medical science today counts up to 55 this man coming to

Jesus begging him to help may not have been afflicted by Hansen's disease leprosy it may have been some other skin disease to heal him required Jesus to know the precise nature of his disease it may have been a disease caused by a skin destroying bacteria but it may have been something else it may have been skin cancer it may have been psoriasis it may have been severe eczema we don't know but Jesus did and he knew how to deal with it and he powerfully overcame whatever the precise nature of that disease was not only was his knowledge complete of that disease his power was overwhelming having touched the man and spoken these words I am willing be clean we read and immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean the supreme power of the

Holy Spirit which filled Jesus beyond measure worked and the disease was dispelled and forever gone what doctors cannot do Jesus did with a word and a touch no medicine involved no painful procedures to endure immediately we read the leprosy left him throughout the gospels we see Jesus power at work don't we he exercises unclean spirit he calms a vicious storm he heals people people from all kinds of diseases he even raises the dead to new life surely Jesus is the most powerful man to ever lived can any president king or prime minister do what Jesus did that day can any sportsman religious leader or media star do what Jesus did that day put Elon Musk before this man and he would have been powerless to do anything except send him into space but

Jesus with just a touch and just the word changed this man's world forever whatever the nature of our suffering and pain today it's not too big for Jesus to deal with and overwhelm with his powerful touch and word maybe doctors counselors and friends have exhausted every avenue of help but Jesus is greater than them all and he is able to help you when no one else can be sure that if you come to Jesus Christ today as your savior he can deal with whatever it is that is causing you to suffer so grievously look at what Jesus does with his supreme power we read I am willing be clean and immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean Jesus does not use his power to control others but to cleanse them he does not use his power for evil purposes of manipulation but for good purposes of freedom the man was cleansed of all that made him unclean he was restored to pursue a new life he was given a second chance

Jesus changed this man's world from the dark and depressing place it had become to the light place of opportunity and renewed humanity contrast this with the purposes for which we as human beings use power we weaponize it we use it to dominate and rob others of their God given life and opportunity to reach their full potential as human beings we control others we use them to further our own agendas but see what Jesus does with the supreme power he has he cleanses us he purifies us he restores us to true humanity and he relieves us of the pressures to conform which enslave us in a merciless cycle of self loathing he says to us today would you be free from your burden of sin would you be free from your passion and pride would you be white much whiter than snow there's power in the

[23 : 23] Lord Jesus Christ to do all these things to free us from all that presently chains us in the suffering and misery of the human condition the man whom Jesus healed became altogether new that day healed liberated set free restored what is there not to love about Jesus Christ which is why if you speak to Christians today you'll find them following him as disciples and worshipping him as their saviour and lord one final thing given the willing and the power of Jesus it seems the strangest thing that he was hated so much and crucified so cruelly strange but not so strange because we know that on that cross Jesus was shedding his blood as the ultimate demonstration of the willingness of God to cleanse us and the power of God to free us from sin misery and the fear of death he died not for any sin he committed but for the sins we had committed he died to make us new and in his blood there is healing for anyone who will come to him in faith and trust so you see in the light of all we've learned today perhaps really he is the

Jesus I never knew perhaps you can also understand why I've preached this verse more than any other in the whole Bible ultimately none of us should ever doubt the willing or the power of Jesus but it all resolves down into this one question are you willing to do what this man afflicted with leprosy did we read he came to him he came to him come to Jesus today bring with you your sin and suffering and tell him all about it come to him today and say Lord if you are willing you can make me clean you will find but Jesus has the willing and the power to change your world forever love you it music is a to it things not together and we hear and and og stories and about it

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