

The Power of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] And I encourage you to have open the Bibles in the pews at page 789 to the reading from Matthew. As I said at the beginning, we're beginning a sermon series today on Matthew 8 to 10 over the next six weeks or so, which I'll be preaching through these chapters.

And let's pray as we start. God, our Father, we thank you for your sure and reliable word to us that testifies to the Lord Jesus Christ and is powerful to make us wise for salvation in him.

So we pray, Lord God, today that your spirit will take your word, write it on our hearts, that we may believe it and do it for the glory of Jesus.

Amen. All words and no action. It's a common complaint made usually to people like politicians, churches, leaders in general in our society.

Certainly not one that you could level against Jesus. Jesus has just finished preaching the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7 at the top of the hill.

[1 : 1 1] And it still rates as one of the great speeches of all time. Last Christmas, I gave my sister for Christmas a book of something called the greatest speeches in history or something like that.

It had a CD that you could listen to them. I think this one didn't have a CD with it. But Matthew 5 to 7 was there, or at least part of the Sermon on the Mount was regarded as one of the great speeches of all time.

And it has in it so many famous statements, expressions that we are familiar with, part of our language. The wise man built his house upon the rock.

Famous words, profound words, challenging words. To us. Well, the Sermon over. Jesus comes down the mountain, probably overlooking the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee.

And he comes down towards Capernaum, the town on the very shore of the Sea of Galilee, which is his base, it seems, for most of his adult years of ministry, the last two or three years of his life.

[2 : 3 2] The crowds which had gathered around to hear him preach, it seems that they are following him down the hill towards the shore of the Sea of Galilee. At the end of chapter 7, we're told that these crowds were amazed at Jesus' teaching, for he taught as one with authority.

And now in this passage today, we'll see further authority in action, as well as in the words that he'd spoken earlier. It's not so much that it's simply words then and now in chapter 8 onwards, the action, because we also see in this chapter, Jesus' words continue and powerful words indeed.

What we find in this first half of chapter 8 today, it's a little bit like a doctor's waiting room. Jesus heals one person and then another and then another. Different people, different ailments, different illnesses.

I remember years ago being in Nigeria with Peter and Elspeth Young, whom we support as missionaries from our church. Elspeth, as many of you would know, is a doctor.

And she took me to visit Vom Hospital, where she now works. And it was partly a visit so that I knew the hospital and met a couple of people and had a feel for the sort of work and ministry that she did.

[3 : 53] But it was a slow visit because virtually at every point, somebody would come up to Elspeth for help. Sometimes they were sick people, but often they were the nurses, maybe other doctors and staff would say, could you please give some advice about this patient or this?

And so we walked through the wards and Elspeth kept being diverted to seeing various sick people in the hospital. It's a little bit like that here in Matthew 8. We just get three examples of Jesus healing.

But we're told at the end of this section that Jesus healed many people and cast out demons. So it's a bit like that sort of doctor's waiting room type of effect. Firstly, in this case, it's a leper who comes to Jesus.

Lepers in Jewish society from the Old Testament rules were socially ostracized in a way. They were regarded as ritually unclean.

They had to live outside the camp or outside the city. The rules of all of this come in the book of Leviticus. It's not great bedtime reading, but might help you get to sleep, actually.

[4 : 57] But in Leviticus 13, we read, for example, about a leper that he shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease, which in many cases was for a lifetime.

Some of these leprous diseases were incurable. Leprosy in the Bible often is a broad term, meaning a whole range of skin diseases, whereas today it's slightly more technical disease.

He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp, in effect quarantined, partly for reasons of contagion, but partly also as a ritually unclean.

So it's astonishing that this leper comes to Jesus when there is a huge crowd of people with Jesus. We're outside a town at this point, it seems. A bit later on, Jesus enters the town of Capernaum.

So presumably this man is living outside the town and he's heard about Jesus. I mean, you could hardly fail to know because of the crowds that were with him as he taught and as he walked around.

[5 : 59] And one assumes that this leprous man, in order to guard others against his skin disease, was approaching Jesus, saying things like, you know, out of my way, I'm a leper, unclean, unclean.

And people would back away. And he came before Jesus and knelt before him. An act of great, almost worship, if not worship, certainly a mark of high respect in verse 2.

And he says to Jesus, Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean. He doesn't say, please make me clean. He says, Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.

That's a statement of great faith. Great faith because many of these skin diseases were incurable. See, it would be different if they were curable diseases.

And this leprous man came to Jesus and said, well, I could go to that doctor or that doctor or that physician or that wonder worker over there and they could make me clean. But I've chosen to come to you to make me clean. But rather, he says, in effect, my disease may well be incurable.

[7 : 09] But if you choose, you can make me clean. That's an astonishing statement of faith about the power of Jesus to do what normally could not be done by any other person.

You can make me clean if you choose. And Jesus' reply is also astonishing. He doesn't simply say, be clean.

But read what it says in verse 3. He stretched out his hand, presumably because the leper's at a slight distance from him so that he's not too close and breaking the taboo sort of keeping distance because he's a leper.

So Jesus stretches out his hand and touches him. Now, normally, if you touched a leper, you were regarded as ritually unclean for a period as well.

But here what happens is that Jesus, who is clean, reaches out and touches an unclean leper and the unclean leper becomes clean. And Jesus is not contaminated.

[8 : 13] That's remarkable. The act of stretching out is an act of some compassion as well to this man, that he's actually touching him. You remember the big publicity that happened whenever it was 15 years ago when Princess Diana touched AIDS victims in southern Africa, for example.

Well, here is something more profound than that. But an act of great compassion as he touches and cleans the man. Notice that the language of healing is not actually used, although he's healed.

But the issue is that he's made clean. So he's, in effect, now acceptable within the fellowship, the gathering or the assembly of God's people.

He's not kept outside of God's people. He's now able, and indeed Jesus commands him in a minute, to go, in effect, to the temple, which he could not normally do because he was unclean.

Having made him clean, Jesus says, I do choose, be made clean. Immediately, his leprosy was cleansed. Immediately. That is, it isn't the case that the next morning he woke up and bits of the skin had flaked away and it's now looking a bit better.

[9 : 23] You know how people get treated for skin problems or sunburn or acne or something. It takes some time before all these things are treated. Immediately. That is, if you were there, you would be able to see, presumably, the skin that was diseased instantaneously become well.

We don't see that. No doctor I've ever been to can do stuff like that with all their medical training. But that's what happens here. Immediately, the leprosy is gone. Jesus gives him two commands.

See that you say nothing to anyone. We see that a few times in the Gospels. Some people think it's Jesus trying to keep secret. And in part, that's what's going on.

Jesus is trying to dampen down the sort of hysteria of the crowd that will build as he does miracles. But it seems that when Jesus does say this, it's in particular when he's in this area of Galilee, which is under the jurisdiction of one of the sons of Herod the Great.

Herod Antipas. The Herod who is there at the end of the Gospels when Jesus is on trial in Jerusalem. He was a pretty evil man. He's the one who had John the Baptist beheaded. And it seems that in particular in that area, Jesus is trying to dampen down the crowd hysteria.

[10 : 44] Partly for his own safety, but he knows he's going to die. It's partly to delay, in a sense, the opposition that ultimately does lead to his death. But the second command to the man is to go show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them, referring to laws back in Leviticus 14 as well.

This man then would have to travel from Galilee down to Jerusalem and for the first time be able to enter the temple precincts, assuming that he'd been a leper all his life.

For the first time able to enter the temple precincts with an offering of thanksgiving to God that he would present to the priest and he would declare that he's been made clean by Jesus of Nazareth. And so it would become a testimony about Jesus.

So in effect, the law of leprosy in Leviticus 13 and 14 would actually function pointing to fulfillment in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Well, the leper, presumably, as I said, was outside the city. Now in verse 5, Jesus enters Capernaum, a little village right on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

[11 : 54] Part of it's almost submerged in the waters of the Sea of Galilee. And it's on the border of Herod Antipas' territory before you go into Gaulonitis, which was ruled by his half-brother Philip in these days.

He comes into Capernaum and a centurion came to him. Centurion would be a Roman soldier, officially over a hundred soldiers, although not always was there exactly a hundred.

And this Roman centurion would be a Gentile, a non-Jew. And it seems that in these days, the Roman authorities were working with Herod Antipas, who was sort of semi-Jewish, the king over Galilee area, in bringing law and order to this northern part of Israel or Palestine.

The man comes to Jesus and appeals to him. So there's an element of strength about his language. And says, Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed in terrible distress.

Now you might well expect a cynic to say, well, what do you want me to do about that? That is, he doesn't actually ask anything. He just simply says, Lord, my servant is paralyzed, unable to walk, at least, in terrible distress.

[13 : 11] We don't know what's caused it. Presumably it's some form of accident rather than life condition. Otherwise, he wouldn't be regarded as my servant. He wouldn't have ever been in the service of a Roman centurion.

The implication is, do something about it, heal him. But he doesn't actually ask that. Jesus' reply says simply, I will come and cure him.

There's actually an emphasis on I. I will come and cure him. Because Jesus, in the action that follows, is deliberately drawing attention to himself and the power that he has.

The man's response to that offer is, again, astonishing. He doesn't say, great, let's go, let's hurry. But rather he says, Lord, I am not worthy.

The same words that John the Baptist uses about Jesus. I am not worthy. To have you come under my roof. But only speak the word and my servant will be healed.

[14 : 19] For I also am a man under authority with soldiers under me. And I say to one, go. And he goes. To another, come. And he comes. And to my slave, do this.

And the slave does it. That is, here is a man who has people under him. He also is under others. They issue him orders. He does them. He issues orders. They do them. And it's an amazing statement.

Here is a Gentile man saying to Jesus, all you have to do is say something. And it will happen. That is, he uses the analogy of authority in the Roman army and applies it to Jesus' authority over the paralyzed man.

And says, you speak and it will be done. From a distance, remotely. You don't even have to come to my house. It's astonishing that this Roman Gentile man would say that he is not worthy for Jesus to enter his house.

Again, that's an astonishing statement. And the theme that this man's words are drawing attention to is the authority of Jesus to heal.

[15 : 26] The same idea, same word that's used at the end of chapter 7 when the crowds are amazed at the authority of his teaching. And this man is, in a sense, proclaiming the authority of Jesus to heal.

Well, even Jesus is amazed. It's not often that Jesus is amazed. Only twice, I think, in the Gospels. Here, the man, Jesus, who presumably knows everything, nonetheless is amazed.

And he turns from the centurion before him to his disciples, his followers. And he says to those who followed him, Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.

That is, I might expect to find faith that I am the Messiah amongst Israelites who know the Old Testament and see in me the fulfillment of the Old Testament. That's what Jesus could expect of Israelites.

And that's who he's turning to, probably largely Israelites. But he's saying of this Gentile man, in him there is such faith that I have never seen in an Israelite.

[16 : 36] And he's commending it to the Israelites. He's saying this is the sort of faith, this is the quality of faith that you should have, in effect. It's not about quantity of faith.

He's not saying this man's got more faith than you, as though he's got sort of 80% faith and you've only got 60%. It's not a comparison of quantity. But rather it's the quality of faith.

And in particular, this Gentile centurion has shown a faith that is focused sharply in Jesus Christ, in his power. And a faith that shows the universal power of Jesus, even for Gentiles.

Not an exclusivist power that is only for Jews. You see, often people say to mature Christians, to clergy, people have said it to me.

I wish I had the amount of faith that you've got. But actually, that's not the issue. It's not an amount of faith. It's rather where your faith is placed.

[17 : 40] For example, if I had a chair here made out of paper, it doesn't matter how much faith I've got. If I sit on it, it'll just fall down. It won't hold me up.

But you may not have much faith that these pews would hold you up. But if you sit on them, so far, so good, they do. That is, it's not how much faith you've got, but where your faith is placed.

If you place enormous faith in an untrustworthy person, it won't change the person. They'll let you down. But if you have just a skerrick of faith, like a mustard seed, and place it in something that is absolutely trustworthy, it'll never let you down.

It's the object or the quality of faith, not the quantity. And that's what Jesus is commending here. A faith that is focused sharply in Jesus Christ, in his power to heal here.

And it's not about the amount or quantity of such faith. Now, Jesus' words actually commend this man when he turns to the others and says, I've never found such faith in Israelites.

[18 : 50] And the words that follow show, in effect, that this man has encapsulated what we could call Christian faith. Jesus goes on to say in verse 11, I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Now, Abraham is regarded as the great patriarch of the Jewish people. They're all descended from him, through his son Isaac, through his son Jacob. So they are, if you like, the fathers.

And Jesus here is picturing the heavenly banquet, the messianic banquet, where the people of God will be gathered to feast in heaven with joy with the Messiah and Abraham and so on.

And Jesus uses language from the Psalm reading that we had, Psalm 107. Many will come from east and west. But it's not simply Jews who will be gathered, the racial descendants of Abraham, but rather people of any nation who will come.

Because what Jesus knows and what Jews and Israelites had largely forgotten was that the promises to Abraham were not exclusively for racial descendants. Indeed, Abraham's name means father of many nations.

[19 : 59] And those who bless you of other nations, they will be blessed. So the promises made to Abraham are promises that are actually originally meant, as Jesus rightly understands, as this Gentile centurion amazingly understands, for Gentiles as well as Jews, from people of east and west to north and south, from every tribe and tongue and race and language will be gathered around the throne of heaven.

And that's in effect what Jesus is anticipating as he says those words in verse 11. But they come with a sting in the tail. For he goes on to say in verse 12, He doesn't mean that every Jew, that is racial heirs of Abraham all the way down, every Jewish person, after all Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are there.

But rather he's saying, just because you're racially descended from Abraham is not your guarantee of arrival in the kingdom of heaven and at the banquet. Don't presume upon race.

The issue is faith. Faith in Jesus Christ. That's a very severe warning of hell, weeping and gnashing of teeth. But as so often in the New Testament, these descriptions of hell are used as warnings, not so much of unbelievers, but of people who presume wrongly to have an entry ticket to heaven, like racial Jews in this case.

Jesus is correcting wrong thinking and saying that what matters alone is faith in Jesus Christ. And it doesn't matter who exercises such faith.

[21 : 40] They will be part of the heavenly banquet. Well, it's a challenge there, I think, to us, to make sure that our faith is not misplaced. For it's easy actually to divert our faith and place it in wrong places.

My parents were Christians. Or I'm an Anglican. I was baptized or confirmed. Or I was married in the church. Or I go to church. And think that somehow that's where my faith is placed and that's what will give me entry into heaven.

But it's wrong. It would be like these Jewish people thinking, well, we're descended from Abraham, we'll be okay. That's wrong. It doesn't matter who we are or what our backgrounds are.

What matters at the kernel of our lives is that our faith and trust, no matter how small, is placed in Jesus Christ. If your faith is not placed there, if it's placed in some other place or some other person or some other practice or heritage or tradition, then it's placed in the wrong place.

And this passage is urging us to correct that thinking and make sure that our faith and trust for heaven is placed in Jesus Christ alone.

[23 : 00] Almost as an afterthought in verse 13. He says then to the centurion, having spoken in effect to the group of people gathered around him, he turns back to the centurion and says, go, let it be done for you according to your faith.

Not because of your faith. It's not so much a reward for faith, but rather simply saying it will be done as you asked. What you've asked for, it will be done according to your faith. You've expressed a desire out of faith and it will be done.

And we read the servant was healed in that hour. In that hour. In that hour. The same sense of immediacy that we saw with the leper as well.

Well, thirdly comes Peter's mother-in-law. This is no time for mother-in-law jokes. And I don't have one, so I'd never make them anyway. Jesus entered Peter's house and he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.

Houses were not so much huge mansions, but they had many rooms often and would be for extended families. And archaeologists believe that this actual house, Peter's mother-in-law's house, has been found.

[24 : 10] And those who've ever been to Israel, to Capernaum, some with me, have seen it. They're on the side of the sea. And the reason why people think this is the particular house is because archaeologists have found inside it inscriptions that imply the worship of Jesus in a room that was a domestic room that had become reshaped into a larger room for bigger gatherings.

And the inscriptions on the walls indicated the worship of Jesus. And the dating of those inscriptions, some archaeologists date back to the middle or latter part of the first century AD.

That is, within a generation of Jesus' life. There in this little town of Capernaum. And so the likelihood is, this is Peter's mother-in-law's house, where Jesus had his adult base and lived and stayed there with disciples over two or three years before he died.

And it became a place and centre of the worship of Jesus. Well, whether or not it's the right place, it could well be. And reinforces the general reliability of these accounts we read in the Gospels.

These days, the Franciscans have built a church on the site, as you can imagine. They've built it like a spaceship so that it actually hovers over on great big concrete or steel legs.

[25 : 30] And unless you're a Franciscan and can get into the church, which once I could, normally you have to sort of peer underneath, looking across to this house. Because in the church, there's got a glass floor, so you can look down in a very convenient way.

Well, here, Jesus rather heals Peter's mother-in-law. He touches her hand, something that would not normally be done, especially because not only is she sick, but also a woman.

And the fever left her. And again, the senses of immediacy. When you and I have a fever, the next day we might think, oh, I'm a bit better, but I've still got to take it slow.

A few days later, we think, oh, yes, the fever's gradually going. And within a week or whatever, we're well again. But here, the senses of immediacy. She's feverish, lying in bed.

Jesus touches her. And she gets up and serves him. The verse goes on to say at the end of verse 15. Not because it's wanting to show her being a sort of subservient woman just doing all the menial chores for Jesus, but rather as a demonstration that she really is well, straight away, immediately.

[26 : 39] Just like the leper. Just like the paralyzed man. The summary comes in verse 16. And in Mark's gospel, this healing of Peter's mother-in-law, we're told, happens on a Sabbath day.

Matthew doesn't tell us that, but it explains why verse 16 says that evening they brought to him many. Because at the end of the Sabbath, after sunset, people are now free to travel, do work.

And so as soon as the Sabbath is over, they're all bringing people who are sick and possessed with demons to Jesus. And he cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who are sick.

Well, this passage, without a doubt, demonstrates a great power and authority of Jesus over sickness and illness. Backs up his authoritative teaching.

Authoritative words and authoritative action. Indeed, in these three examples, and of course verse 16 tells us there were many, many others, we find something that is impressive and attractive and rather compelling about this Jesus.

[27 : 48] Virtually unique in history. An astonishing power to heal all sorts and all conditions of people. And we ought never to sideline that sort of power.

And there are some who would. And say, well, Jesus on earth did that sort of power, but, you know, healings have stopped and we don't really attribute much or expect much these days. These verses remind us that the power of Jesus to heal is real.

And I don't think there's any suggestion that it stops when he leaves earth and ascends to heaven either. But there's more that this passage is teaching us. The three people in the examples are a leper, a Gentile and a woman.

Thank God that I'm not one of those. Would be what some Jews might pray. They'd certainly pray that about, thank God I'm not a Gentile. And the men would pray, thank God I'm not a woman. Presumably, even if they didn't articulate it, they'd be fairly thankful they weren't a leper.

Because all three are categories of people who would be distanced from the assembly of God's people, especially at the temple. So the Gentiles could not approach the temple.

[28 : 56] There was a sign there, one sign that's actually been found by archaeologists in the last 50 years or something, that says, you know, Gentiles coming beyond this spot do so under promise of death. Not very inviting, but that's the way it was.

Gentiles were not allowed into the even outer courts of the temple. The women could go a little bit further, but they weren't allowed into the inner courts, the court of the Israelites or the court of the priests. And lepers, well, they couldn't go anywhere near it, even in the city.

They had to stay outside the city. So these are all people who are, in a sense, kept apart from the gathering of God's people and at one level geographically distanced from the holy of holies of the temple of Jerusalem and the sacrificial system and so on.

They're social religious outcasts in many ways of Jesus' day. Two of them he touched, astonishingly. The other he remarkably didn't touch and didn't even go to and yet healed.

Jesus is what someone called an equal opportunity dispenser of grace. Well, this inclusivity of Jesus is a challenge, I think, to us.

[30 : 02] It reminds us that whoever a person is, whatever their condition, background, heritage, tradition, race or language, whatever it is, all are invited, in a sense, by Jesus.

They don't all exercise faith. It's not a universalism that says, well, everybody goes to heaven. Far from that. But it is a universalism of invitation.

That Jesus welcomes everyone. That, I think, should challenge some of us. Because still sometimes we welcome those who are like us.

But we're tempted to shun or turn up our nose at people who are a little bit different. The people who maybe don't dress as well. Or don't wash as well.

Sometimes we distance ourselves on racial grounds. Sometimes on grounds of physical illness or ability. And so on.

[31 : 04] As Christians. There is no place for Christians in inviting people to come to Jesus for anything that smacks of racism or sexism, exclusivism, elitism or snobbery.

And this challenges us to ensure that we have the same openness and even-handedness of invitation. But there's more to be said.

Because Matthew finishes this account by quoting from the Old Testament. He quotes from the prophet Isaiah. He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.

Now we could simply say, here is Jesus fulfilling part of the Old Testament in healing sickness. Bearing our, or taking infirmities and bearing our diseases. And true that would be.

Because we find time and again in the New Testament these little quotes or allusions back to the Old of Jesus fulfilling something from the Old Testament. But it's a bit more profound and more significant.

- [32 : 08] Matthew is quoting from Isaiah 53. Perhaps the most famous passage. One of the most famous of the whole of the Old Testament. He quotes rightly from verse 4.

About the suffering servant who will take our infirmities and bear our diseases. And that passage then goes on to say this. Yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the punishment that made us whole. And by his bruises we are healed.

All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have all turned to our own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Bigger, deeper, more profound than physical healing, than taking our infirmities and sicknesses. Jesus is the one who dies in our place.

- [33 : 11] Carrying our sins to make us whole. Jesus' actions of healing here are powerful. But they point to an even greater power.

The power to take away sin and transgression. The power to bring people truly to the throne of God's grace.

I'm sure that it's deliberate that the three people who are singled out in the examples here are people who are in Jewish practice, kept apart from the center of the temple practice.

But in a sense they become symbolic of us all. Because our sin keeps us all apart from God. These are signs in effect of a greater power.

The power of Jesus who dies on the cross to free us from sin. The connection is this. The reason why there is sickness and illness in our world, the reason why there is disaster and tragedy and death in our world, is because of the world's corruption from human sin in the beginning.

- [34 : 32] It doesn't mean that every sickness that you have is because of a sin that you have committed. Occasionally there might be direct connections. We shouldn't discount that possibility. But in general we live in a world that's corrupted and fallen.

Like a computer with a virus that occasionally does bizarre things or nothing. That's our world. We still see of course greatness and goodness and nobility and love and fantastic things in this world.

But it's far from perfect. It goes bizarre or haywire. Ever since the original sins of Adam and Eve. We, this world, are corrupted, subjected to futility and decay.

Crying out for liberation and freedom. The cross of Jesus is what stops all of that. That's where the power to forgive comes from.

And the power to heal. And so the healings that Jesus gives here are a foretaste of the benefits of Jesus' death on a cross. Because what Jesus' death on a cross ultimately takes sin out of the picture.

- [35 : 41] As well as its consequences and its results. Which includes sickness and illness. And death. But you and I don't enjoy the full benefits yet of Jesus' death on the cross.

If we're believers we are forgiven. We have a relationship with God. But we don't yet enjoy the resurrection body. We may from time to time find healing.

And other benefits in this life. But it's the kingdom of God. The messianic banquet with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That's where we will know and enjoy and experience for eternity.

The complete absence forever. Of sickness, illness, pain, grief, mourning, death, evil, suffering and so on.

In this life from time to time. We should still pray and can still pray to God, to Jesus for healing. He has that power.

[36 : 46] A power that derives from the cross of Christ. But it's a power that's balanced like the leper's request. If you choose, you can make me clean.

That is, it's a faith that acknowledges the power of Jesus to make clean. But acknowledges the sovereignty of Jesus and of God the Father. Whether or not they choose.

And so Christian faith will be a faith that knows and trusts and believes in the power to heal. And prays to that, for that healing when needed.

But it's also a faith that knows and acknowledges the sovereignty of God. Who may or may not choose to heal in each and every situation.

But a faith that trusts nonetheless. And looks forward to the complete absence of sickness. In the kingdom of heaven. Which is open to all.

[37 : 44] The selection of three people here. Also prefigures those who receive forgiveness through the death of Jesus. So that we know that in the kingdom of heaven.

There will be Jews and Gentiles. People of every race and tongue and tribe and nation. Men and women. People who on earth were sick. And people who on earth were well. These verses here.

Should not frustrate us. If our prayers for healing now are not answered. But rather give us confidence. That Jesus can heal now. And sometimes does.

But even greater confidence. That the kingdom of heaven will mean. That you and I will be free of all illness and disease forever. That's certainly something to look forward to.

For there are many here who suffer from all sorts of things. Serious complaints and not so serious. There are many here who are suffering the frailty of old age.

[38 : 46] Of arthritis. Of blindness. Of physical handicap. Of cancer. And this passage should make us look forward with greater and greater confidence.

Of what heaven will be like. Because of the power of Jesus cross. Not only to bring physical healing. But to bring complete wholeness spiritually as well.

For whilst we may well long often. For the end of our pains on earth. There ought to be greater longing for the end of sin.

In our lives as well. It may be. That you've never come to this Jesus. For wholeness.

For healing. For forgiveness. It may be that your faith is not actually placed in him. But may be placed in some tradition or heritage or background that you have.

[39 : 46] Let me urge you to come to this Jesus. This powerful Jesus. This one who suffers. As he carries not only our infirmities and sicknesses.

But our transgressions and sins to death. So that we can be made whole. Only in this Jesus. Do we find the power.

To save.