

The King who bears our diseases

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: 25 January 2026

Preacher: Chris Lowe

[0 : 00] At the beginning of this series in Matthew 8 and 9, this was the question we asked.! What hope is there for us as human beings in the face of disease and despair and death?

! On Thursday afternoon I was at Addenbrooke Hospital and locking my bike up outside the outpatients reception area, I turned to go in. There was a woman who walked past slightly bent over and she was coughing weakly and uncontrollably. So another woman just stood outside waiting for a lift with tubes from a backpack going into her nostrils. I went through the doors and into the outpatients reception and the place was packed, it was packed. Men and women, old and young, hobbling, shuffling, some being helped along and others in wheelchairs. There was the coughing, the hacking and the wheezing and the face masks as we tried to ward off other people's diseases. Everywhere I turned in the outpatients reception area, of course, illness and suffering. I don't know if you know this, Addenbrooke is an amazing place. There's 1100 beds, there's nearly 7000 staff, they have a budget of 300 million pounds a year, the latest medical equipment, highly skilled staff, expert staff, many or most of whom are hard-working and caring. And I am so glad to live in Cambridge, so close to a place like that.

And so thankful to God actually for expert care and surgery for me personally down the years. When we suffer and fall ill or contract diseases or have a lump that needs investigating, we flock there for help.

Of course we do. And yet as I stood there on Thursday afternoon with Matthew 8 swirling round my head, I was reminded that in the face of disease and despair and death, you will not find solid and lasting hope at the hospital. You won't. You may find help, wonderfully. Temporary relief, drugs to combat some diseases, surgery to cut out a tumour or rebuild a body part, even sometimes death prevented and a new lease of life given. And yet the very best that the very best hospitals can do is only delay what is coming to us.

We know that right? We've seen cancer take a deathly hold of people we love. We've walked through the Covid-19 pandemic and known of people close to us who have died. We've seen weakened elderly relatives taken by pneumonia. Doctors can help. Addenbrooke's is wonderful.

[2 : 55] But at the end of the day, there is no lasting and solid hope they can provide for us as our weak and diseased bodies head towards death. With that in mind, just stated clearly, I hope you understand that, would you come this morning to the hope held out for us in the coming of Jesus Christ? In these verses, Jesus, who Matthew's Gospel shows came into this disease and death gripped world as God's King with all authority.

Jesus, who came with the God-given authority not just to relieve, but to deal with and ultimately do away with everything that so ruins our lives, disease and death included, once and for all.

That's what's going on in his life and ministry and death. We've seen Jesus in action already in chapter 8, if you've got it open in front of you. Over these past couple of weeks, there was a man with an incurable infectious skin disease who came and knelt before him and said, Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean. And Jesus reached out his hand to the leper and touched him. I am willing, be clean. And immediately he was cleansed. The centurion's servant who was lying at home, paralyzed, suffering terribly. And from a distance, Jesus simply spoke a word and the servant was healed. Stunning authority, that.

Our passage this morning, verses 14 to 22, rounds off this first section of Matthew 8 and 9. To those in the grip of disease and despair and death, hear this firstly this morning from verses 14 to 17.

[4 : 38] Jesus, God's servant, bore our diseases. Let me read verses 14 and 15.

When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her and she got up and began to wait on him.

Notice a couple of things here. First, she has a fever. We might say today, I say, I've got a bit of a fever, which means maybe my temperature's just pushed above 38.

I should take it easy for a few days. This is much more than that. Fever here as some kind of disease marked by a raging high temperature.

She's flat out in the grip of it. It could lead to death. You might notice also, unlike with the leper and the centurion's servant, no one here asks for healing.

[5 : 38] Jesus simply comes into the house and sees and acts. He touched her hand. Just one touch from the king is all it takes.

And the fever left her, miraculously. And then, isn't this good? She got up and began to wait on him. There's a chap called Matthew Henry, 17th century pastor, who wrote, They that recover from fevers by the power of nature are commonly weak and feeble and unfit for business a great while after.

I think it's nicely put. That is true, isn't it? As you start to get over the winter flu, it can take weeks before you feel fit for business again. Some of us will have COVID felt weak and feeble for months, if not longer.

Not here. Because this recovery is not by the power of nature. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him there and then.

Then, next, verse 16. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all who were ill.

[6 : 53] Can you imagine that? People hear of what Jesus does, and they come flocking towards him, and he drives out the spirits, more on that next Sunday, and he heals them.

So imagine Jesus standing in Market Square in Cambridge one early evening. And imagine then the wards and the beds in Addenbrooks emptying, as desperate relatives wheel and carry their loved ones down Hills Road towards the one who is willing and able to heal them with a word.

That is what took place, verse 16, 2,000 years ago in Galilee. Which, by the way, is in public, with many, with many witnesses, and all of them are healed.

Here's the question. What is going on? What are we meant to understand as Jesus acted in this way in history so publicly and visibly?

Well, Matthew tells us, intriguingly, looking back most likely on all the action of chapter 8 so far, verse 17, this was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah, he took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.

[8 : 18] What does that mean? Just take a breath and dive down here a little bit with me. Matthew, if you see footnote B at the bottom from that quotation, is quoting from Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 4 that Christian just read.

The book of the prophet Isaiah is earlier in the Bible, it's in the Old Testament, it's written hundreds of years before the coming of Jesus. And through the prophet Isaiah, all those years ago, God had promised that he would send one man into our world.

One man to rescue the world from sin and suffering and death, and everything that so ruins our lives, and restore creation and the nations of the world to God.

In these prophecies, this one man, the one God-given hope for the world, would be a king. And this king would be God's servant. And Isaiah 52, verse 13 onwards, which we heard read just now, is known as the fourth servant song, and lays out so beautifully and famously the work of God's servant, centuries in advance.

As Matthew sees the public healing ministry of Jesus, he wants us to know this was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.

[9 : 46] That is firstly, be absolutely sure, Jesus is the long-promised one. And as he deals with diseases and heals the ill, he fulfils the prophecies.

Jesus does the promised work of God's servant, because he is God's servant. He is the one hope for our world, come for us to save us. But it's not just that.

Because by quoting from Isaiah 53 here, we're being shown not just the identity of Jesus, but also what is going on, what he is doing as he heals.

Do you see what it says? He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases. And taking up and bearing is the language of lifting a heavy load from someone.

You're on a school camp and you're carrying a massive backpack and it's weighing you down. And I say, let me take that from you. And I remove your heavy load.

[10:50] I take it up from you. I bear it on my shoulders that you might be relieved. It says here Jesus is acting here to take up our infirmities and bear our diseases.

Some of us have read Isaiah 53 quite a bit before. We might know that the main focus of those verses is the death of Jesus on the cross as he takes up our sins and bears our iniquities.

And that is right. You see that in Isaiah 53, verses 5 and 6. Look at this on the screen. Verse 4. Surely he took up our pain.

Matthew says, translates it, infirmities. And bore our suffering, our diseases. Yet we considered him, this servant of God, punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him. And by his wounds we are healed.

[12:00] We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. This is the very heart of the Christian faith.

At the cross as he dies, Jesus is pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The Lord took our sin and iniquity from us and laid it on him.

Verse 6. But Matthew's point, quoting from Isaiah 53 verse 4, is that the saving work of Jesus extends beyond his death on the cross and encompasses more than that.

You and I, in and of ourselves, are so weighed down, are we not? That we carry our sins, every disobedient thought and word and deed which separates us from God and deserves his condemnation.

And along with that, and on top of that, we carry within ourselves all the bitter fruit of sin, the disease and decay and death that marks us as disobedient creatures in a fallen world.

[13:18] But Jesus, God's servant, came to save us from all of that. As he died on the cross, Jesus took up the sins of many and bore their iniquities.

Let me take that from you. And at the same time, closely tied to his work on the cross, here in Matthew 8, in his public healing ministry, Jesus also took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.

Let me take that from you too. The root of our human condition, sin. The fruit of our human condition, disease and decay and death, all of it, Jesus lifts from us and absorbs into himself and takes it upon himself and bears it both through his life and in his death.

In his healing ministry here, in Matthew 8, Jesus was taking into himself and onto himself the painful burden of your and my weaknesses and diseases.

And he did that. Living, healing and then dying. He did that. So that, not yet today, but in the future kingdom of heaven, you and I and all who belong to Jesus Christ, we will be utterly relieved and we will live utterly free, not just from the presence of sin, but also from the experience of sin's bitter fruit.

[15:04] That is, in the kingdom of heaven, every rotten sin and every bodily weakness and every debilitating disease will be gone.

did you know that? Revelation 21, verse 4, looks to that future heavenly kingdom and says that, on that day, God will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

and all of that is because Jesus, God's servant, bore both our sins and also our diseases too. It's taken a long time to try and work that out and explain that.

We asked at the beginning, what hope is there for us in the face of disease and despair and death and there is so much help that you can find at Addenbrookes and from other health professionals but not ultimate hope.

What hope is there for us? Jesus. Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ. And so with these verses in Isaiah 53 in front of us, I wonder if you can imagine what it will be like in the kingdom of heaven.

[16:27] Let me tell you. There will be no more infirmities. There will be no more bodily weaknesses. Your brain fog, your bodily pain, your fatigue, will be gone.

And the weakness that you feel in your ageing body as you struggle to climb the stairs will be gone. Any paralysis will be gone.

You will no longer nor ever cry in frustration or pain in the kingdom of heaven. No more weakness. There will be no more diseases in the kingdom of heaven.

There will be no danger or fear of another COVID-like respiratory virus. Skin diseases will be gone for good. There will be no more lumps in you.

There will be no more cancer diagnoses because cancer will be gone. There will be nothing to fear. There will be no one to mourn for. as we live in the presence of the God who so kindly forgives us and restores us to himself and will wipe every tear from our eyes, you and I will be holy and we will be healthy through and through.

[17 : 45] and all of that because of this servant, God's servant, our saviour Jesus, through whose work as he bears sin and disease, the old order of things will have passed away.

Isn't that wonderful? And so therefore, this morning, with Jesus as the one hope of the world for you and me, what must we do?

And we who live in the shadow of disease and death, what should we do when we realise who Jesus is and what he does? First this morning, verses 14 to 17, Jesus, God's servant, bore our diseases.

Second, therefore, in the light of who Jesus is, very simply, follow him. And that is verses 18 to 22. When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake and then a teacher of the law came to him and said, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

Jesus replied, foxes have dens and birds have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Another disciple said to him, Lord, first let me go and bury my father. But Jesus told him, follow me and let the dead bury their own dead.

[19 : 01] Matthew structures his gospel very carefully. Here in chapter 8, after three miracle episodes in verses 1 to 17, a little section saying, follow me.

Jesus will then calm a storm, restore demon-possessed men, heal a paralysed man, another three miracle episodes and then in Matthew 9, verse 9, follow me.

Seeing God's authoritative king in action in history, dealing with everything that so ruins our lives, this is what we are called to do, very simply, follow him. Take him as your king, trust him as your saviour, have him as your lord and follow him and receive a place in the kingdom of heaven.

There are times in his ministry when Jesus speaks with tender invitation, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Here though, in response to those who come to him, he highlights the cost and the commitment of following.

First, the cost. you will have no home here. So in verse 19, a teacher of the law came to him and said, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

[20 : 17] And you think, to be honest, if this king Jesus will take away my sins and my diseases, you think, too right, I will follow him wherever he goes, sign me up for anything. Jesus replies very soberly, foxes have dens, birds have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

Although Jesus is the son of man, the one to whom God gives all authority and glory forever, the truth is, in his earthly life, he will have nowhere to lay his head.

Homeless, often without comfort, Jesus will endure in his life shame, suffering, rejection, be treated as an outsider before being killed.

And if you and I want to follow along behind him and be a Christian, we too will have no home here and we too may experience something of what he did.

There is a cost to following him. And, second, following him involves total commitment. Jesus comes first, not family.

[21 : 25] In verse 21, another disciple said to him, Lord, first let me go and bury my father. In a culture where burial took place within 24 hours of a death, it's unlikely this son's father has just died and his son is on the roadside talking to Jesus.

Rather, he's saying, let me fulfil my long-term responsibilities to my family as a first thing, family first, and then when all that's done, I'll come and follow you.

I mean, whatever going on here, Jesus' reply is still so demanding, is it not? Jesus told him, follow me and let the dead bury their own dead.

That is, I come first, I who am the son of God. I come even above your family. and some of us will need to hear this, many of us, and when you start to or you do break from your family's atheism or other religion or gentle Christianity and they say, what are you getting yourself into?

Don't you believe that we're good enough for you? You will feel the pressure to put your family first and when you break from your wider family's expectations about your career, your relationships, what you prioritise and the long weekends they expect you to spend with them because family

really does take priority over church and Jesus, right?

[22 : 55] You've got to hear these words of Jesus here, follow me first. Following Jesus means coming to him desperately. It means real cost and total commitment.

But of course, it's right to follow him fanatically. Isn't it? God's king and servant. And not just right, but absolutely worth it.

Because as our weak and diseased bodies head towards death, there is only one man who has acted to save us. There is only one who has taken up our sins and diseases and will welcome us into the kingdom of heaven.

And his name is Jesus. He is God's servant and your saviour. So this week and in your life, follow him. Would you follow him? I'm going to pray and then we are going to sing together.

Let's pray. He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.

[24 : 14] Almighty God, we sometimes this kind of stuff is almost too much.

We praise you this morning for your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world as our saviour. Thank you that in his death he bore our sins in his body.

Thank you that in his life he bore our diseases into himself. Thank you that through him we might be made members of the kingdom of heaven.

Would you help us, please, whatever the cost, to commit ourselves in wholehearted faith and allegiance to this Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we pray would you see us through our lives and our deaths and into eternity. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.