

# The Kings who heals with authority

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[ 0 : 00 ] Following on from where we were last week, again in Matthew 8, and starting in verse 5.!

I say to my servant, do this and he does it.

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then Jesus said to the centurion, Go!

[ 1 : 19 ] Let it be done just as you believed it would. And his servant was healed at that moment.

Thank you, Tyler.

As Chris said earlier, we are coming to God's word. So let's just take another moment just to pray and lift our time up together.

Dear Lord, please open our eyes that we may see and behold wonderful things from your law. Lord, you are good and upright.

You teach sinners in your way. So please, would you help us? Lord, you promised that you will lead the humble in what is right and teach the humble your way. So Lord, help us to have humble hearts now that you would speak to us and that we be changed by what we hear.

In Jesus name. Amen. Now, have you ever been in a situation where help felt really far away?

[ 2 : 23 ] A few years ago, I was hiking in Snowdonia, actually with a friend along this ridge. Actually, it's been quite famous this week for the wrong reasons, sadly.

It's called Krib Gok and there was a walker who actually died along this ridge this very week. Now, I actually just stumbled across this ridge. I wasn't really planning on going across it until the point me and my friend about halfway along realized we were in a bit of trouble.

And it wasn't easy to go back the way we came. We felt a bit helpless. We felt far away from help on this ridge with no one around to help us.

Now, in that situation, we were able to just carry on and eventually we made it down. But there are many situations in life, aren't there, where that's not always the case, where help is really far off and there's nothing you can do to change it.

Perhaps that's illness or loneliness. Or perhaps you've lost a loved one. We're helpless to change it.

Now, in today's text, we're introduced to, in verse 6, a servant who lies at home paralyzed.

[ 3 : 43 ] Now, paralysis is a helpless condition. You're totally dependent on other people. You lose the ability to move most of your body.

It's irreversible. It's incurable. Even today, with latest advancements in medicine, paralysis is something that is very difficult to overcome.

No hope of healing. It's an indeed and a condition where you'd feel very far away from help. And though we may not be suffering with the same physical condition here this morning, paralysis is used in the Bible to point us to a deeper problem.

The problem of our spiritual nature. You see, from the moment that we are born, we love and we do the wrong things. We ignore God's good design of how we should use our lives and relate to him and one another.

This is what the Bible calls sin. And the problem is, sin separates us from God. It makes us unable to come near him and experience his blessing, his goodness.

[ 4 : 58 ] Sin paralyzes us. Leaves us helpless. Far away from God.

And the problem is, the effects of sin are irreversible. A few months ago, I had an accident and I got blood all over this shirt.

And as much as I can, as much as I can try and clean this shirt, I just can't get rid of the stain. There's nothing I can do to take away that stain.

And the problem is, this is what sin is like to God. Once sin is there, there's nothing I can do to take away that stain. And not only does it stain our status before God, but it stains our hearts, our desires.

It's why life is often so hard and why there's so much brokenness in this world. It explains why even sometimes when we want to change, we find it can seem impossible.

[6:07] The stain of sin leaves us paralysed. Far away from help. Helpless. So the question we are looking at this morning is, is why can we have hope of healing when hope feels far away?

When help feels far away? And I think from today's text, from God's word, there are two great sources of hope for us to take away, to remember, to give us that hope.

So firstly, Jesus' word heals with divine authority. Take a look down with me if you've got your Bible open at verse 5.

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him asking for help. Lord, he said, my servant lies at home, paralysed, suffering terribly.

See this agonising, helpless situation, the servant who is paralysed with no hope. Yet look how Jesus responds in verse 7.

[7:19] Jesus said to him, shall I come and heal him? Easy to miss how shocking this is. He just says, I'll come and heal him, or shall I?

It's as if Jesus knows he's got so much authority that he can just do whatever he wants to do. But why can he have such confidence?

Well, it's because he has the authority of God himself. And this is what the centurion realises. Take a look down with me at verse 8.

The centurion replied, Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof, but just say the word and my servant will be healed. Just see the word, he says.

The centurion realises all Jesus needs to do is speak. And it will happen. Why? Verse 9. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.

[8:24] I tell this one, go, and he goes. And that one, come, and he comes. And I say to my servant, do this. And he does it. Now, a centurion was a commander of a hundred people in the Roman army.

They had lots of power. And whenever they said something, it would happen, because they had the authority of the Roman Empire behind them.

Now, okay, that might work with the Roman military. We maybe can have a similar experience with, I don't know if any of you have these alexas in your house, these things where voice recognition, you speak and things happen, like music comes out.

We had an experience yesterday where that wasn't working. So it just shows you the kind of authority we have sometimes, even with alexas. Now, okay, so the centurion might have had command over some people.

We might be able to speak to alexas and music comes out. But what's astonishing here is the centurion is saying is just as we can speak and music comes out of an alexa, Jesus can speak and a paralysed man can walk again.

[9:44] Just say the word and it's simply begun. Isn't that astonishing? Now, there's only one being who has that kind of authority to simply speak and reverse natural laws, and that is God himself.

At the very start of the Bible, in the first chapter of the Bible, God speaks creation into being.

Just, I could have picked loads of verses, but here's just one of them. And God said, let there be light, and there was light. The point of showing this is God said, let there be light.

And there was light. It happens. Creation comes into existence. Things happen simply because God speaks. Now, at this point, people often say, I can't believe in miracles.

But do you realise the very fact that you and I are here is already a great miracle? Because over a hundred years ago, leading scientists of the day did not believe in a beginning because they couldn't conceive of the idea that there could be a beginning.

[11:03] They believed the universe must have always existed because how can stuff just appear from nothing? But then they discovered the universe was expanding. There must have been a beginning.

But then they're left with this problem. How do you explain something coming to existence from nothing? It's a miracle. God is the answer the Bible gives us.

God speaks. Things happen. Miracles happen. And what the centurion in today's text realises is that Jesus has this same divine authority.

When Jesus speaks, he speaks the very words of God himself. He doesn't need to ask for anyone's permission. Jesus can simply say with authority, I will come and heal him.

And isn't this great news for us here this morning? There's no situation or circumstance that is beyond Jesus's healing power. Whatever guilt or brokenness we have, nothing is too big for Jesus to overcome.

[12:17] Because Jesus himself is God, has the authority of God. And just as God spoke, life appeared. So Jesus can speak. And this servant would be healed.

And he can reverse any problem. And note how this also means we're never too far away from Jesus' help. I think sometimes we feel we wish Jesus was physically here to touch us, to help us. But what this miracle shows is that we don't need Jesus to be physically here. When we come to Jesus' word in the Bible, we have everything we need.

We have his words. Words which have power to change situations, to bring healing in even the most helpless situations. Isn't this incredible news for us when we feel paralysed in a world full of problems?

Jesus' word has authority to restore and heal this broken world. And in case there are any doubts, take a look down at verse 13. Jesus said to the centurion, Go, let it be done for you as you believed it would.

[13:33] And the servant was healed at that very moment. Instantly healed, from a distance. Why can we have hope of healing when help feels far off?

Well, firstly, Jesus' word heals with divine authority. But secondly, Jesus' kingdom has no borders. You see, it's not just enough for Jesus to have this authority, because how can we know that he will help us? Because none of us are worthy of his help, actually.

We all mess up. We all have the stain. The stain of sin in our lives and our hearts. It's a bit like we're actually on the wrong team to God.

But you imagine being a Manchester United player and God being on Manchester City's team.

Now, that's just an example. I'm not saying that is the reality. But, you know, it's that kind of thing where you're on the wrong team.

[14:37] Why should Jesus help us? But today's passage shows us that why Jesus' divine authority is good news for everyone.

Take a look down again at verse 5. Notice who it is who comes to Jesus. It's a centurion. The point is, this guy's on the wrong team.

The centurions were the people who were opposing God's people, who were holding them captive. He was an outsider. He certainly wasn't a churchgoer.

He's someone who represents someone who is far away from God. So, do you see the shock in verse 7 when Jesus says, I will come and heal him, or shall I come and heal him?

How could this man who's come from God go to this person who's on the wrong team? Yeah, this is what makes the centurion's faith so amazing to Jesus.

[15:41] In verse 10, Jesus heard all what the centurion said about him, and he was amazed. He said to those following him, Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

You see, someone who on the outward appearance, who seemed completely hopeless when it comes to God, didn't have much knowledge about Jesus, and all the promises God had made, yet, with what little understanding he had, he came to Jesus.

trusted in his authority, and acted on it. And so Jesus says in verse 11, I say to you that many will come from east and west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

What Jesus is saying is people will come far and wide to enjoy the blessings God promised to his people. Friendship with God himself, often expressed in the Bible as a meal.

What he is saying is the centurion is a picture of what Jesus came to do, to draw people from every tribe, tongue, and nation to himself, by dying on a cross to take the stain of our sin on himself, so that anyone can come to him, and have a restored relationship with God, and experience his healing power and blessing in their lives.

[17:12] No one is too far from God's kingdom, and this should be a great encouragement for all of us here this morning. So why can we have hope of healing when help feels far off?

Well, Jesus' word heals with divine authority. Jesus' kingdom has no borders. Isn't that encouraging news for us this morning? So come to him.

Come to Jesus in faith. Take a look at verse 13 again. Jesus said to the centurion, Go, let it be done for you as you believed.

Jesus commends the centurion's faith, and that is what leads to the healing. And I think Jesus gives the centurion as an example for us to follow, of how we should respond to Jesus, when we know his authority to heal, to forgive, but also know his far-reaching kingdom that has no borders.

And so to think about his example, I want us just to go through the story again briefly, to reflect on the kind of elements of faith that the centurion shows us.

[18:35] And to help us remember that, I've tried to put an outline of faith. You can see it on the handout. So let's just go through it one by one. So firstly, faith forsakes self-reliance.

In verse 5, simple thing to miss, but just notice the centurion came to him. Simple observation, but it shows that the centurion realised his need for Jesus.

He realised this was not something he could fix himself. Do we realise this this morning? That we are helpless without Jesus?

That we can't depend on ourselves to fix our brokenness? We can't depend on ourselves to try and get rid of the stain of sin in our lives? So often when I face problems in life, my first temptation is to try and fix it, to try and fix it myself, to rely on my own strength, my own wisdom, rather than to bring it to Jesus and to seek his help.

It's a faith that when faced with helpless situations, comes to Jesus for guidance, for his work, to his word. A faith that comes to Jesus in prayer, that realising without him, without his help, you are helpless.

[19:57] So faith forsakes self-reliance, but secondly, faith accepts Jesus' lordship. Verse 6, Jesus, the centurion says to Jesus, Lord, it's easy to miss the significance of that word, Lord.

This outsider, this Roman centurion, someone who in human terms would have had a lot of authority, humbles himself below this Jewish teacher and calls him Lord.

Humbles himself, humiliates himself actually. Perhaps to capture the significance of this, it's a bit like a prison guard bowing down to a prisoner.

Not an easy thing to do, is it? To accept his lordship. But if we want to experience Jesus' blessing and healing power in our lives, we must come under him.

That means letting him rule over our lives. It means being willing to listen to him in his word. Let him shape us and form us to obey him, even when it's difficult, knowing that he truly is Lord of our lives.

[21:12] sometimes life following Jesus will humble us. It may even humiliate us and make people, as people around us, maybe make jokes at us for following him.

We might lose credibility, reputation. But what we have to gain from following him is far greater in access to all of God's blessings. It's far greater than what we have to lose.

So accept his lordship, accept his lordship. So faith forsakes self-reliance, accepts Jesus' lordship, but faith also identifies with your unworthiness.

Verse 8, Jesus says, I will come or shall I come? And then the centurion replied, Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof.

The centurion identifies his unworthiness of Jesus' coming. Again, this is someone who had power and authority himself acknowledging that he was not worthy to receive Jesus' mercy.

[22:20] Sometimes I think we can be tempted to feel we're entitled to God's blessing in our lives. How often have you had the thought that somehow you're worthy of getting to heaven?

I know I'm tempted to think like this. Perhaps think I'm not that bad a person actually. I try and look out for people, try and help people, give money to church or charity.

Perhaps I come to church regularly or pray regularly. Perhaps you're even involved actively in serving in the works of God's kingdom. kingdom. But do we realise just how dangerous that kind of mindset is?

We haven't looked at this verse yet but verse 12, after saying that the kingdom, many will come from far and wide to experience God's blessing, Jesus says these shocking words.

Verse 12, but the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. As much as Jesus' kingdom has no borders, there's a strong

warning to us in today's passage.

[ 23 : 27 ] The point Jesus is making, those subjects of the kingdom, those people who think they're entitled to God's blessing will be thrown away from God's blessings, far away from God in hell.

But on the other side, isn't it encouraging? Because if you, like me, realise that deep down you're not worthy of friendship with God and to be in his presence and that only Jesus can make you worthy, then God's kingdom is for you.

Jesus came for people like you and me who know that we are not worthy, who identify with our unworthiness. So faith forsakes self-reliance, accepts Jesus' lordship, identifies with our worthiness. Just two more to go. Trusts in the authority of Jesus' word. We've seen these verses already. In verses 8 and 9, the centurion acknowledges that Jesus' word is enough to bring the healing that he's looking for in his servant's life.

It shows he has complete trust and confidence in the power and authority of Jesus' word. A belief that Jesus' word has real power to bring transformation.

[ 24 : 55 ] That he doesn't even need Jesus' physical presence here with him. He has everything he needs if Jesus just says the word. Do we believe this this morning?

That when Jesus word goes out, it goes out with divine authority. You see, what we're doing now is not a trivial thing. We're hearing Jesus himself speak to us by his spirit and it's through believing and trusting in these very words that spiritually dead, paralysed hearts are transformed and given life.

life. It's why meeting like this all together and meeting in smaller groups to study God's word together is so precious. Because when we proclaim his words, teach one another, encourage one another and trust in his promises, real healing and transformation happens.

and it's as we trust in the authority of his word over our lives, let it shape us that darkness and unbelief in our lives is overcome and our desires changed.

It's also trusting in the authority of his word that will shape where we put our energy in this broken world, won't it? I mean, given we're surrounded by so much brokenness, the temptation might be to think the power to fix it will come through political reform, through education, through protests, through imposing laws, advances in science.

[ 26 : 33 ] But Jesus' word has divine authority. If we truly believe this and trust this, how much more boldly should we proclaim this word to the world around us?

So faith forsakes self-reliance, accepts Jesus' lordship, identifies with our unworthiness, trusts in the authority of his word, and finally holds on to his far-reaching grace.

What makes the faith of the centurion so incredible is that even though he knows he's unworthy and far away from God, he knows that Jesus came for people like him.

As Jesus said in verse 11, Jesus came for people from east and west to come and gather before him. Not people who think they have their lives sorted, but those who know they deserve to be far away from God, yet come to him anyway.

That's Jesus' far-reaching grace. That's what we need to hold on to. You see, God promised to Abraham 4,000 years ago that all nations would be blessed through Abraham's offspring.

[ 27 : 53 ] And 2,000 years ago, Jesus came, Abraham's offspring himself, came and brought healing to this centurion servant. Jesus is the one whose kingdom truly has no borders, who came to bring blessing to all people.

He's the reason we can have hope when healing feels far off, because his word is never too far away, and his kingdom has no borders.

So treasure him, adore him, and come to him in faith. Let's just take a quiet moment to reflect and pray together.

heavenly father, do just praise you so much for Jesus.

We thank you that his word really has divine authority to heal, to break down strongholds in our lives, to overcome any brokenness.

[ 29 : 05 ] father, we praise you that Jesus' kingdom too has no borders, that sinners like us, people who know our unworthiness, can approach you through Jesus, can come to Jesus knowing that.

Lord, help us to come to him in faith in our lives, help us to reflect on ways in which we're perhaps hampered by unbelief in different ways, help us to stop relying on ourselves, to identify with our unworthiness, Lord, to accept your authority, to trust in the power of your word, and to hold on to your far reaching grace.

Change us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you, Alistair. This was the first person that Jesus healed, and it wasn't the last. This song, I invite you to respond to what we heard by remembering this fact that Jesus has continued to gather the broken and to heal them.

In fact, to heal us as we look forward to gathering the broken.