

Shock Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] This morning we resume our series in the Gospel of Matthew. We pick up with chapter 8 having completed the first seven chapters of the book. Chapter 8 isn't where we left before turning to a few other series in our summer interlude, but I'll come back to where we left off shortly here.

The first series when we started Matthew was called The Story of God With Us. We named it that because Matthew loves narrative to convey the truth about Jesus.

That's the story. But we also included God With Us because Matthew very early on reveals that Jesus is Emmanuel, which means God With Us.

So hence the story of God With Us is what that first title and sermon series was called in chapters 1 through 7. God With Us was great comfort to some, confrontation to others, and a challenge, I think, to all of us.

The second series is named Come to Jesus. It's on the back of your service sheet. You'll see that from Matthew chapter 11 verse 28. Come to me, all who labor and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[1 : 1 4] Maybe you might have kind of guessed that that's why we've actually called the series by that name. Now this series is about an invitation not only to those who are yet to know Jesus, but also for those of us who already do know Jesus.

For we all need to keep coming to Jesus. We need to keep turning to the Father. We need to keep being filled with the Holy Spirit. And so Christians are always repenting.

We're sinning, we're confessing, and turning back to the Lord. And the Reformers equated faith with this repentance. And it was in fact Luther's first thesis in his theses.

So we have this series, which is Come to Jesus. I don't know why you came here this morning, but I hope it wasn't just to listen to me or see others or other reasons that we come. But we come because we come to Jesus.

Now when we left off our series in Matthew's Gospel, it was actually Easter Sunday. And the theme of the sermon was in a word, authority. I don't expect you to remember that, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ reveals the Lord's authority.

[2 : 2 6] Jesus Christ understood himself in this way. And at the end of the book, he states this, So today's message from chapter 8, verses 1 to 17, is also about authority.

Jesus' authority was revealed to his disciples or learners in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus didn't come to abolish the law, as he says in that, as the listeners learn, and we did too, but to complete or fulfill it.

So at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, the listeners conclude this in chapter 7, verse 28. In your Bible, you can turn to that page and look down.

This is what Matthew says, And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

So notice, not just a few, not just a crowd, but the crowds. They responded to Jesus' teaching. How? They were astonished. What did they conclude?

[3 : 3 4] That he did so with authority. And why did they react this way? Well, Jesus' teaching influenced them in this way. The impact of our Lord's message was real and revelatory by comparison to the other scribes and teachers.

Or, well, let's face it, there was no comparison. Because Jesus is unique. He has authority. And in a word, the crowds were shocked.

Hence the title of today's sermon, Jesus Shock. Let me ask you a question. Are you at all shocked by Jesus? When you read the Bible, sit in a Bible study, come and listen to a sermon, are you astonished, amazed, awestruck, stirred, shocked?

What shocks you in your daily life in this world that seems bored and captured by the trivial, that is amazed by the ridiculous, and lacking in real authority for lasting change?

What shocks you? Jesus' authority is like spiritual defibrillators applied to the soul, the heart, the mind, the will.

[4 : 50] Jesus' authority comes through loud and clear in this teaching. But it didn't stop there. It came through also in his healings. In chapter 4, we learn the following.

And he went through all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So knowing the impact of Jesus' authority through his teaching, now Matthew is going to show us the impact of Jesus' authority through his healing.

And in many respects, Jesus' authority came through teaching in a verbal word. Now we're going to see Jesus' authority come through in a visual word. Often the healing comes by his word.

So two things I want us to know through these four demonstrations of Jesus' authority in our readings today. And the first is that Jesus' demonstration of authority are persuasive to draw sinners to himself.

And then the second thing is Jesus' demonstration of authority are the power of God to change people's lives. So first, Jesus' demonstration of authority are persuasive to draw sinners to himself.

[5 : 57] Now, we live in a world where people wield a great deal of authority. Authority is applied in the most intimate of relationships between, for instance, parents and children. To the most public of relationships between civil servants and citizens.

An important matter with respect to authority is the way we receive it, or it is received. Some authority is ascribed, other authority is achieved.

With respect to our Lord, we see it ascribed by his Father at his baptism. When a voice from heaven is heard to say, this is my Son with whom I'm well pleased. In relationship to the Son's authority, it's announced by his Father in heaven.

And we find that Jesus is very persuasive. We see that in these four accounts of healing. I mean, just name what the four are. I know you've heard them already. But the first is a leper at the foot of a mountain.

Jesus draws him to him. This man comes to Jesus drawn. Second, a centurion servant in Capernaum. Third, Peter's mother-in-law. And then fourth, we are told that many who are oppressed by demons are delivered.

[7 : 10] All these people persuaded by Jesus to come to him and then leave in ways much different than they came. Well, Jesus' authority is expressed through his teaching and his healing, as I've already mentioned.

But it also connects his teaching with his healing. So through both, people are persuaded to come to him. They come to be cleaned and healed, raised and delivered.

And we live in a culture that has, I think, some opinions and ideas about Jesus, but they're largely indifferent. They're not actually persuaded.

What a contrast to when our Lord walked this earth. Crowds not only listened to Jesus, but they longed for him. And the leper came to Jesus wondering if Jesus wanted to make him clean.

The centurion came to Jesus confident that he could heal his servant. In each case, those healed by Jesus were persuaded to come to our Lord in the first place.

[8 : 15] They heard something. We might say they needed him the most, or they were desperate, more desperate than others. But the problem with that, I think, is that places, the reason they came to Jesus upon the leper himself and the centurion himself, or maybe even you and I ourselves.

But in fact, Jesus is the reason that they came to him and we actually come to him, more than the condition itself, even though that plays into it.

Well, what was or is it like for you today? Well, why do you come to Jesus? Why do you keep coming to him?

Is it your condition, or is it his persuasion? We all have some need for sure, but our greatest need, I think, is the authority or the rule of Christ in our life.

And so that perspective puts us in the hands of our Lord, not the other way around, putting him in our hands. So interestingly, our condition and need is, I think, far worse than we realize.

[9 : 35] The leper and centurion's needs were real, but greater than they knew. And both would realize this when Jesus urged the leper to show himself to the priests like Moses commanded.

He's pointing him to the law, which actually points to Jesus. And then Jesus warned his disciples after the centurion and servant is healed. He warns them of the darkness, actually, that's to come, pointing them to the wrath of God, which Jesus would ultimately satisfy.

So after the cleansing and healing, the work of God through Jesus Christ isn't finished until something happens later. Now, you may remember the old song, It's Only Just Begun.

Well, the cleansing and healing are not ends in themselves. Yeah? But they are opportunities for Jesus to persuade and point people to not just what Jesus does, but Jesus will use these healings to point people to who he is, both what he does and who he is.

This is the first thing about Jesus' authority, the persuasiveness on people's lives. But also, Jesus' demonstration of authority through these healings are the power of God to change lives.

[10:57] And when we hear the word authority, the other word we most often associate with it is power. In our Anglican tradition, when we address God, more often than not, we appeal to his power.

More of our colics, that is our prayers, begin with the words, Almighty God. And after those words, the attributes of God are added. Well, there is a great demonstration of Jesus' authority in these 17 verses.

His power. The leper and servant already mentioned, but now a feverish woman is raised, and demon-oppressed people are delivered. Power is applied in ways unknown previously.

Hinted at before Jesus is coming, but never like this in one man. And there is a shock in every miracle of these pages. The leper lacks certainty in Jesus.

Jesus' will to cleanse him. But shock. Jesus had more than the will to cleanse. He had the power. The centurion, by his belief, drew out some shock in Jesus.

[12:05] Jesus was surprised at his belief. And Jesus, in turn, then shocked his disciples. Not only did he come to save Israel, but also Gentiles, like this centurion and his servant.

For the centurion was not actually one of them. Some of Israel would find themselves looking from the outside in. And this reversal is a really big shock to them.

A big surprise. But it includes Gentiles, and it may not actually include some of the Israelites. The biggest shock of the passage, though, I think comes in verse 17, where we read, this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

He took our illnesses and bore our diseases. Some people take this to guarantee our healing of illness and disease through the cross.

I don't think it guarantees that. No doubt, Jesus, by his spirit, then and still today, heals. I've seen it, and some of you have received it.

[13:08] And no doubt, one day, none of us will suffer illness and disease when we see our Lord face to face, either after our death or when he returns. Jesus, I don't think, is drawing a fine line between healing now, temporarily, or later, eternally.

But he is using the occasion to do what every miracle does, a demonstration of his authority through his power, which is shockingly unlike we expect.

We can't put him in a box. Not what we expect, because this quote in Isaiah, which we're going to look at, is about the Messiah's suffering for our sin.

So our Lord receives anyone who comes to him. He will also go to anyone and relieve them of suffering by healing, cleansing, raising, and delivering, as we see in this sometimes.

And for what reason he chooses to take and bear our illnesses and diseases, but more importantly, our sin through his death on the cross.

[14:17] And we all have medical and physical needs. They matter to Jesus. More importantly, our spiritual needs matter to Jesus. Our condition of sin, which separates us from God, is our greatest need.

And Jesus will die on the cross. Jesus died on the cross. And that is a power that he achieves to forgive us of our sin and free us for service in his kingdom like nothing else.

Can you imagine this power of Jesus? The power that it took to stay on the cross when he could have come down.

Matthew is pointing us to this great and saving event of God in these verses. by telling us of the suffering servant in Isaiah chapter 53 foretold.

And this is why Jesus came teaching and healing. Not only come to tell and to show us that he has power over illness and deeds, but he has the authority over not just something on the surface, but

something much deeper, much more original.

[15:24] Authority over transgressions and iniquities. So listen to the fuller text that Matthew actually quotes from Isaiah chapter 53 verse 4. It says this, Surely he has borne our griefs and sorrows and carried, sorry, sorry, surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

And upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all. The power demonstrated through the raising of this woman, that is Peter's mother-in-law, verse 15, is the authority of a new king and a different rule.

This authority raises the sick, but it also is the authority, the power, and the persuasion of God that raises us who are dead in our trespasses and sin by first convicting us of our sin and then convincing us of Jesus' lordship, his authority in our life.

[16:52] And that calls us to submission to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now let me close here briefly then. There is a real temptation, and it may seem like that's what I've been doing at this point, to allegorize this text.

To say that we all have spiritual leprosy worse than a physical one that Jesus wants to cleanse. To say that we have a spiritual paralysis, right, that's worse than the physical one that Jesus can heal. Or to say that we are spiritually bedridden and that illness is worse than the physical one that Jesus wants to raise. And that's definitely true, but I think it misses the point of this reading.

Jesus is demonstrating his authority through healing just as he did through teaching. And this authority should shock you and I because we'd rather be the authority in our own life.

And his authority is a shock to our lives, and we all need that. Our Lord is persuasive, but it's not just to be persuaded by him. Our Lord is powerful, but it's not just to be impacted by his power.

[18:07] Our Lord has all authority given to him over heaven and earth. and that is enough for you and I to completely, unreservedly submit to him.

Don't you think? I speak to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.