

# The Healing Touch of the King

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Date: 03 April 2022

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[ 0 : 00 ] We continue in the Gospel of Matthew, where at each stop along the way, we see Jesus' earthly ministry and his life, and we come face to face with both king and kingdom.

And Jesus reveals the Gospel of the kingdom, teaching men how to live in it, serving their king. Today, Jesus has come down from the mountain, where he preached his first sermon, the greatest sermon he preached, the Sermon on the Mount, and immediately, all that he had just said runs into the personal realities of the people that were crowded around him for that sermon.

And as he headed into the city of Capernaum, a leper approaches him crying, unclean, unclean, and the crowd spreads out away from Jesus as the leper walks right up to him, and Jesus touches him, of all things, and heals him.

And then a Roman centurion, with a sick servant, comes to Jesus and pleads with him simply to say the word, because he knew what authority meant, and he understood Jesus to be a man with authority.

He understood what many people today don't understand. But that authority was truly sovereign and powerful, and that he could say the word, and the servant could be healed, which is exactly what happened.

[ 1 : 37 ] See, the content of the Gospel sermon, a sermon such as Jesus preached, wasn't intended to fly out and hang over the people like some unattainable platitude.

Like every sermon, it was meant to reach into their lives, into the grit of daily life, and touch them, to change their outlook, to change our outlook, to change us from the inside out.

Jesus didn't come as a high and mighty king, disconnected from the people, somebody who was untouchable, but as a lowly servant, one who is loving and compassionate, and would condescend to their place, even touching them when they were unclean, so that he could take their burdens upon himself, and ultimately bear on the cross in one decisive action, the once for all victory over them.

In Jesus' death and resurrection, his and our enemies would remain. There would still be sickness, sorrow, pain, and death, as we all can attest to those facts.

But these enemies would not hold ultimate power over us as children. Something new, something powerful, had begun. As Jesus, the king, in his death and resurrection, had set in motion an inexorable process of bringing all of his enemies under his feet.

[ 3 : 17 ] The last enemy to be defeated being death itself. Stand with me, please, as I read for you our text this morning. Matthew chapter 8, verses 14 through 17.

Hear now the word of our Lord. Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So he touched her hand, and the fever left her.

And she arose and served them. When evening had come, they brought to him many who were demon-possessed. And he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet.

He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our Lord will stand forever.

Let's pray. Father, we know that like the grass withers and the flower fades, we too will one day fade.

[ 4 : 25 ] But we do know also that death does not have its final victory over us. But that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the King of the universe, has won that victory for us.

And so we come with grateful hearts. And we come yet knowing that we are in broken bodies. We live in sin continually.

We are surrounded by a sinful world full of brokenness and pain and suffering. And so we thank you, Father, that you sent your suffering servant.

Help us to see, more than anything else today, him and his ministry to us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. By way of context for our passage today, both Mark in chapter 1 and Luke in chapter 4 tell us that this was a ministry in the home of Peter that occurred right after Jesus left the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Jesus had taught in the synagogue. He had healed a man who was demon-possessed. And from there, came immediately to Peter's house and went in and saw that Peter's mother-in-law was sick.

[ 5 : 53 ] And the other accounts tell us that the disciples brought Jesus' mother-in-law's sickness to Jesus' attention. And that he went to her right away. He touched her.

And he healed her. Removed this fever that Luke said was a high fever. So I'm sure it was a scary time for them. And Jesus came in and in an instant demonstrates his sovereign power once again.

Demonstrates who he is by healing her instantly. And he touches her again, a touch from Jesus. And he heals her.

And immediately, the completeness of her healing is demonstrated. And the immediacy of her healing and her gratefulness for that healing are demonstrated by the fact that she got up and served those who had come into the house.

And once again, like last week and the week before, we get these demonstrations of Jesus' ultimate power, his ultimate sovereignty over all things.

[ 7 : 00 ] And Luke puts this healing in an interesting way. In chapter 4, verse 39, he said that Jesus rebuked the fever and it left her. Which causes some to wonder what was going on with that fever.

was there more than sickness and some physical malady involved. But regardless of the source of sickness, we know that Jesus is sovereign over all.

He speaks the word, he touches with his hand, and immediately it leaves. You know, the Jewish rabbis had a rule against touching people with leprosy.

They had a rule that those Romans were unclean. They also had a rule that people with fevers shouldn't be touched. And so far, Jesus is breaking all their rules.

Jesus is right in their faces, in the faces of the hypocritical religious leaders of the day, those who are more concerned about the outward form than the inward man, going back to the Sermon on the Mount, the scribes, the Pharisees.

[ 8 : 06 ] Jesus is ministering purposely breaking their rules, showing that that is not the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. This is the gospel of the kingdom by touching so many of these unclean people.

Why does Jesus do this? Other than for those obvious reasons I just gave you. I believe Jesus is showing us his heart, revealing his compassion and his love for each of us.

There is something that is intimate about a touch. There is something that connects people with a touch.

It brings two lives together, and it shows a level of loving acceptance that isn't communicated with a wave or just a word.

We greet each other on these Lord's Day mornings as we come together. We greet each other with handshakes and with hugs, and you know, particularly a lot this last weekend of the, I don't know if it's just a reformed thing, but the man bro hug, you know, the one hand and your shoulder bump.

[ 9 : 25 ] We greet each other by touching each other and hugging each other and maybe even possibly the occasional holy kiss. Just to make sure you don't get too comfortable in your pews there and remember that that's in the Bible.

Jesus, being eternally divine, knew Peter's mother from before the foundations of the earth. He knew her as one of his covenant children, one upon whom his blessings were given.

And coming into this scene, he sees and perhaps meets her face to face for the first time, but he already knows her and he already loves her.

And the first time, he's, for the first time, he's in the same room with her physically and he reaches out and touches her. Now, Jesus no longer walks this earth in physical form.

He's not here to physically touch you or hug you or remove your tears or your fevers, yet we know for certain that we can still be touched by him.

[ 10 : 49 ] He touches our heart through his word, doesn't he? That word pierces and goes places that other words cannot. As we read it, we are convicted and encouraged and our eyes are brightened through the Spirit's illumination and we are enlivened by it.

And it's as though Jesus, as we read it, is speaking directly to us. Have you had that kind of experience when you're reading the scripture and you think, surely that was written just for me right now.

It feels like that personal of a touch. Jesus also touches us through his spirit.

His spirit powerfully and actively ministering among us in various ways, healing and restoring and illuminating our minds and touching us right where we need it at the moment we need it to convict us of our sin and to turn us in repentance away from it.

He intercedes for us taking our case before the father. He gifts us and empowers us and fills us for service to the king. And so everywhere in our lives, whether we recognize it as such or not, we are constantly being touched even though it's not that physical touch that Peter's mother-in-law felt.

[ 12 : 28 ] It is no less personal. And it is no less real. Apparently the crowds were still following hard after Jesus from all that was said in the Sermon on the Mount as they came down off the hill and it seemed like it was just boom, boom, rapid fire succession activity right off the Sermon of the Mount, right down off the mountain.

Jesus running into the leper and then the centurion and then going into the synagogue and teaching on the Sabbath and then going to Peter's house and one of the accounts, I can't remember which one mentions the crowds being at the door and looking in and certainly both accounts talk about Jesus healing because apparently these crowds in the evening of that day brought a demon possessed and sick man to Jesus and sick men and he healed them all he cast out the demons with a word he healed the people all of them it says and we continue to get and there's just one after another stacking up the evidence of Jesus power over our sin and Jesus power over sickness and Jesus power over the supernatural evils of this world over the demons that oppress people he's powerful over it all and certainly

Jesus is building this case here for who he is and what he has come to do and he is wanting to make the case in his own way as he travels the countryside here for these years of his earthly ministry and apparently all of this was done according to verse 17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah who said he himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses and so Jesus did this so that those who knew the scripture would recognize him for who he was and they would begin to understand and receive him as he was meant to be received as the Messiah king they had been waiting for it's interesting as you read the accounts of the demons being cast out frequently these demons would make some kind of profession of who

Jesus was and Jesus would shut them up he would quiet their mouths because he didn't want them telling his story he didn't want the lying cheating deceiving servants of evil writing the story he himself was telling the story through his own actions and those actions were loving compassionate touching the broken hearted and the cast out and the unclean and those who were on the outside on the fringes and bringing them in in front of everybody in such a way that it would make people uncomfortable especially those religious elite who would be seeing and questioning in their minds how could this man be doing such good things and yet breaking our law so frequently Jesus alone had come to establish himself as king

Jesus would write the story and so he did it perfectly he did it fulfilling the words of Isaiah in these many scenes of healing and casting out demons and they saw this loving and compassionate man who wasn't afraid to be seen with and speak to the lowly and the unclean and even stop where he was going or stop what he was doing to speak with them to speak over them and to touch them but they quickly realized this loving and compassionate man was a man who was invested with great authority so Jesus was loving and compassionate no doubt that's evidence over and over and over and over again but in and through all of these cases there are these clear expressions of his absolute authority that extended over all of these powers of evil and even as we'll see in a few weeks as we'll see in two weeks even power that extended over death and then as we come back to this we'll see that his power even extended over the weather it was completely sovereign what they saw in

[ 17 : 43 ] Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of Isaiah 53 the suffering servant who took their infirmities and bore their sicknesses how do you see Jesus were you standing there in those days as Jesus came down off the sermon on the mount would you probably would have been with the crowds stirred in your heart by these words by a man who spoke differently than all their teachers had spoken who had gotten to the heart of issues rather than remaining on the surface who had made the commandments prominent but made them more difficult to attain in some sense and yet come alongside of them and in compassion and love ministered to them in such a way that they desired to keep his commands how would you have received this

Jesus as he broke all the standard social and political and religious and cultural norms would you have been one of those people looking down your nose and judging him for not doing it just right and by just right I mean just the way you had in your mind the way X Y or Z should be done would you have been more righteous in your mind than Jesus or would you have been one of these who were in the midst of the crowd who were just constantly astonished at what you were seeing and constantly amazed at the authority with which this man spoke and following hard after him one stop after another hearing him teach and seeing the bewilderment in the synagogue of these men who were wondering who this man is and then as he went from the synagogue to Peter's house and the crowds continued would you have been there at the door looking in and watching what Jesus did not only when he healed Peter's mother-in-law with this touch of a feverish woman with a high fever would you have been concerned would you have been looking around where are the scribes and

Pharisees can I show that I'm amazed at this or should I watch my reaction and be more careful about what people think about me or would your heart have been all in and drawn to this man who would out of love and compassion break man's rules so that he could keep God's law there is a message there for us today to distinguish between man's law and God's law we know that one of man's laws that they say is actually God's law the 11th commandment is to be nice brothers and sisters we can't always be nice we should always be kind we should always be loving which requires us to sometimes not be nice in the world's term world's definition for niceness which basically means soft and leaving out the hard truths you see only God's law is righteous man's laws are not

God's laws they are not perfect they do not restore the soul they are not more to be desired than gold they are the dross that needs to be burned off and always today there is a confusion or a conflating of man's law man's ways what man piles on to God's laws so God says this but this is how you have to do this or this is what's socially acceptable for a church to say or do or for a minister to say from the pulpit and we need to all understand that there is no law of men that trumps the law of God and so ultimately we have to always look at the law of God and measure men's laws against it it is the only standard we have by which we must live if man's law is in agreement with

God's law then by all means we obey our civil rulers we obey our parents we obey our elders but when man's law deviates from God's law we must obey God rather than men Jesus is just beginning to show this as he gets into his earthly ministry and it really irritated people in the church it irritated them so much that within a short time they would begin to think this guy needs to be gone we need to do something about him and as we know they ultimately did they put him to death they conspired to get rid of him because man's law to them was more important than God's law how would you have received

[ 24 : 04 ] Jesus in that day when he was coming breaking man's laws so that he could perfectly fulfill this beautiful Isaiah 53 suffering servant text that we have did you know that Judaism still rejects him did you know that in their reading of the scriptures they skip over Isaiah 53 and did you know that for many many years when were the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered does anybody know off the top of their head late forties it wasn't until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found and it was confirmed that Isaiah 53 was in fact in the text between 52 and 54 that they would even admit that maybe this is a part of the

Bible and it's not just them but others where Isaiah 53 was too close to identifying Jesus as the Messiah and King those who would conveniently discard it ran into the Dead Sea Scrolls It was there and here it is but yet they still will skip over it and not read it because it is too condemning to them because if they were to admit that yes Isaiah 53 is scriptural they would have to understand they did crucify the Messiah because there is no doubt that Isaiah 53 is speaking of Jesus speaking of the King who bore our griefs our infirmities our sickness who carried them all for us and took them to the cross this this is our

Messiah this is our King when you think of a king you typically think of a man who sits up high on the throne above the people and rules down over them but Jesus was the king who came down off of that throne and condescended down to the level of the people all the way to a hellish existence for 33 years on this earth that's how loving and compassionate our king is he took on our human flesh so!

so that he could save us he took on our infirmities so that we could have his wholeness he took on our sickness so that we could be well he came all the way down and touched us you know because of his sovereign power he could have simply snapped his fingers and had it all done from the comfort of his throne in heaven but because of the kind of God he is because of the loving compassionate man God he is he came here he came to us he got dirty he took all of the truth of the gospel all of he cut through the dross of man's law and showed the beauty of God's law through the gospel through the perfect fulfillment of the law and through that perfect sacrifice that he made to completely satisfy all the righteous demands of that law on our behalf how do you receive that savior how do you look at your king do you see him as some distant authority you know like

Joe Biden is some distant authority that you just see on TV or do you see him as the one who would walk into your home and sit down next to a leper sit down next to you someone who is unclean someone who does not deserve his touch and yet he would reach out and touch you and heal you and make you whole this is the beauty one of the many beauties of the incarnation of Christ that he could minister to us in this way and it's because of that that he instituted for us a memorial celebratory meal that demonstrates to us again and again that loving touch and his compassion for us as his children if you don't sense if you don't feel if you don't understand and experience that loving touch of

[ 29 : 46 ] Jesus number one you need to examine your own heart examine your faith your belief and then you need to believe him you need to come to this table in full faith that in all of your uncleanness he loves you and compassionately reaches out to you to touch you to heal you to make you whole again that he has done that at this table now you can reach out and touch and take of his body and his blood as reminders of all of these good things and as a seal of them understanding that this doesn't just bring it to memory again it is grace that

God gives you at this table that he not only reminds you but he seals you to you his covenant promises and you in them so you come celebrating you come with joy and yet with great humility and gratification for all that the loving compassionate savior has done and continues to do for all of us amen let's pray