

No One Too Far from God

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Well, the wonderful thing is that we know we're saved because of what Jesus did on the cross, not what we've done.

Amen? And He did pay our ransom, and we praise the Lord for that. Open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 8. I'm excited to share with you today, as Matthew writes his gospel, he wants it to be real clear to you that everybody can come to Jesus, that nobody is too far away.

No one is too far from God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the religious leaders that what they taught was wrong. He told them their attitudes were wrong. What they believed was unbiblical and ungodly.

They were hypocrites and fakes. The stories of Jesus healing people are told here in this chapter by Matthew on a purpose. The purpose is not that Jesus is healing people or His power over sickness, but He's showing mercy to outcasts.

To lepers, Gentiles, and women. They were all considered outcasts. They were less than others, really nothing. Jewish men often stood up and prayed in the morning. They said, God, I thank You that I'm not a woman.

[1 : 10] I thank You that I'm not a leper. I thank You I'm not a Gentile. They had a whole list of things they were thankful of. Jesus puts them right here in one chapter. Remember, most people are following Jesus because they're amazed at what He can do.

They love watching the show. It's almost like a circus in town. They've come to see what's going on. They're not convicted of the fact that they need Him or what He can do. They just want to see what's happening.

So the truth that's being taught in Matthew chapter 8, I want you to look at with me, is that there's no one too far from God to be saved. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done.

He will save you if you will come believing. The first story, chapter 8, verse 1, is a leper. In chapter 8, verse 1, He has come down from the mountain. Great multitudes followed Him, and behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, if You would, You could make me clean.

And Jesus put forth His hand and touched Him, saying, I will be Thou clean. And immediately His leprosy was cleansed. Leprosy is like the most horrible disease you can imagine.

[2 : 18] In their day and time, and even compared to today, it's worse than AIDS in our society. Once you had the disease, you were sure to die. There was no cure. There was no hope.

Everyone was separated from you, and you were required to call out, unclean, so that everyone would stay away from you. You'd walk down the street. You saw somebody coming. You had to have something over your mouth.

You had to put your hand over your mouth and your nose. And you had to holler, unclean, unclean. So everybody would stay about 150 feet away from you. Six feet on a windless day. 150 feet on another day.

They couldn't go to worship services. They couldn't live in their family's house. They couldn't be around other people. They were alone. It had the idea of being smitten of God, cursed by God.

It was feared. What happens, you develop a spongy, tumor-like swelling that would grow all over your body. It would cause a horrible stench, a smell that came from your body.

[3 : 13] It destroyed your voice box, causing people to speak in a very raspy voice. Nobody's close to you. Leprosy took away the feeling so you could easily get hurt. People would grab things with their hand, burn their hand, stick their hand in it, and fire.

It didn't matter. Leprosy is a beautiful graphic illustration of sin. Sin affects the entire person. It's ugly. It's contaminating.

And it's incurable. Sin is deeper than the skin. It spreads. It defiles. It isolates. It destroys. And it has no cure.

But here comes a leper. Look, if you would, in chapter 8 and verse 2. The leper came and he worshiped. And he said, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. He apparently sensed there was love and tenderness with Jesus towards him and towards all people.

He could tell Jesus wasn't afraid or ashamed to associate with him. He didn't shop from a distance like he was supposed to, but he came close to Jesus.

[4 : 16] He came boldly, but not presumptuously. When he walked up to Jesus, he says in verse 2, If you will, if you want to, you can cleanse me. He bowed down.

He fell at his feet. He knew he was in the presence of God. He came believing. He came humbly. He came in faith and confidence. Look at chapter 8, verse 2.

And behold, there came a leper and worshipped. Underline that. Worshipped. Saying, Lord, Lord. He said, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And look what Jesus did.

Don't forget, these people are not allowed around anybody. These people have to call out. They've got to stay usually over 100 feet away from people. And in verse 3, Jesus put forth his hand and touched him saying, I want you to be clean.

And immediately, his leprosy was cleansed. By touching him, Jesus took on his defilement. He got the sickness on him. And the separation that came on him.

[5 : 15] But he gave that leper his health. Let me show you a Bible verse that you ought to mark in the margin of your Bible. 2 Corinthians 5, 21. You and I were sinners so far away from God, we had that same stench of leprosy.

We had that same thing that separated us from everybody. We had that same thing that's sending us to hell. And the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5, 21, what Jesus did was that the Bible says he made him.

God made Jesus to be sin for us. Jesus knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God. You know what happened at Calvary? You know what happened when you got saved?

You know what happened and can't happen for you today? The God of heaven says your sin sends you to hell. Your sin separates you from God. There's no way you can be fixed. There's no way you can be made right. But Jesus comes and takes your sin on him and gives you his holiness and his righteousness if you will but trust Jesus.

The leper knew Jesus could heal him if he wanted to. And today I'll tell you that Jesus can save you if you'll allow him to save you. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2, 3.

[6 : 19] 1 Timothy 2, 3. A passage you should learn well. The Bible says, For this is good and acceptable. Good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved.

Let's say it. Who will have all men to be saved. And to come to the knowledge of the truth. There's one God, one mediator between God and men. The man, Christ Jesus. Who gave himself a ransom for all.

Today, like the leper, you should realize that you have sinned. Like the leper, you should realize your sin is separating you from God. Like the leper, you should realize that sin is going to destroy you.

Like the leper, you ought to realize you're in trouble. But if you are, you can come to Jesus. And he wants you to be saved. And he will save you today. 2 Peter 3, 9. The Bible says, That he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Here's a leper. He represents who we were before we knew Jesus. He represents the sin that was condemning us. He represents the sin that was separating us. And he represents what God does as he brings us to him.

[7 : 23] And Jesus healed him immediately. He healed him immediately. In verse 4, chapter 8, in verse 4, he sends him to see the priest. We don't have time to go into all of it, or we won't take the time this morning.

But when he goes to the priest, there's a whole series of ceremonies. And every ceremony that would be done, and everything that happened, there was the blood being shed, and the bird being sprinkled, and all these things that were going to happen.

If you read about it in the Old Testament, and every one of them was a picture of Jesus. And the leper could be cleansed, but he was only cleansed because of what Jesus did. And you're a sinner, and you're separated from God, and you're on your way to hell, and sin has got dominion over you, and you can't get victory.

But there's one who can give you victory, and that's Jesus, who died on a cross that you could be saved. He took the curse of sin for us. He is the answer. He is the one.

The leper was to go tell no one he's holding him. Because Jesus wasn't trying to hype his ministry or his service. He wasn't trying to promote a circus-like atmosphere or an attitude around him.

[8 : 25] He wanted the people to come to him with genuine needs. So no matter who you are or what you've done, Jesus is waiting, willing, and able to help you. Will you run to him?

When you read that leper story, you should realize, boy, God loves you. He cares about you. And when no one else would touch you, and even your family had to separate from you, and when you were totally alone, Jesus was willing to reach out and touch him and change him, and that's what happened.

So Matthew tells the story. Matthew tells the story because if anybody's an outcast, it's a guy with leprosy. If anybody's on the outside of society, it was a guy with leprosy. But Jesus went to him. Then Matthew tells another story.

It starts in chapter 8 and verse 5, and he tells the story about a centurion. A centurion was a soldier, a foreigner, a Gentile. He was in charge of controlling them. Similar to healing an illegal immigrant today.

Or an enemy soldier that represents all that have done us wrong in the past. In chapter 8 and verse 5, it says, And when Jesus entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion.

[9 : 33] That guy is managing 100 soldiers of the finest fighting machine on the planet of that day and time. And he comes to him and he says, he comes to him and he's going to beg for help for his servant.

The centurion, who would be a heartless man, who would be a leader of killers, has feelings of sympathy for one of his servants who had a paralyzed condition. And he comes and he asks for help.

And Jesus says, hey, I will go with you and I'll go to your house and heal you. No Jew should go into a Gentile's house. But Jesus was willing to go to the Gentile's house, to the pagan's house, to the foreigner's house.

And was going to go and the centurion said, you don't need to go. I'm a man under authority. I understand these things. Speak the word and it will be done. And Jesus said, I've not seen such faith in Israel.

And he heals the servant in that same hour. Remember, and in verse 11, you'll find a great promise I'll read to you in just a minute. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for everyone, not just Jews.

[10 : 33] You've got to understand who he's talking to. You've got to understand who's around Matthew. You've got to understand who's around Jesus. When they see Jesus touch a leper, they're like, what? Nobody touches lepers.

What? Nobody talks to lepers. It was against the rules to talk to lepers. You're to stay away from lepers. But Jesus talked to lepers. Somebody just about as bad off would be a soldier.

You've got to imagine if our country was being inhabited by another country. They were in charge of us. They were controlling us. We wouldn't like them. And Jesus loved them anyway. The gospel's for everybody.

Nobody's outside the scope of our God and his love for people to be saved. He commands a hundred guys. And he comes begging. I want you to look at verse 5.

And I want you to underline the word beseeching. You've got to understand this centurion is not accustomed to asking for anything. When he walks up, he well knows he has a hundred Roman soldiers behind him.

[11 : 26] He doesn't have to beg. But when he sees Jesus, he beseeches or begs him. By the way, he came and he called him Lord. You ought to mark that in chapter 8 and verse 6. He came, he knew.

I'm not talking to a regular guy. Here's a humble Jewish carpenter. And Jesus is that humble carpenter. But this guy recognized this is somebody else. He was concerned for a servant.

That ran contrary to everything about this man and his position. In fact, as I was reading yesterday in their society, they had a saying, If your servant gets sick, sell him or get rid of him.

Don't worry about him. He's just, it's just like what you do with your cattle. You cull your cattle. You get rid of the sick. You get rid of the bad ones. You got a servant with problems. Get rid of him.

Not this guy. The servant's got some kind of paralysis. He was suffering greatly. He should have just gotten rid of him. But he cared. So he goes into the house. He goes to see Jesus and talk to him.

[12 : 21] And Jesus is willing to go to his house. The house of an enemy soldier. The house of a Gentile. That breaks all protocol and all religious separation.

Look at verse 7. Chapter 8 and verse 7. Jesus said, I will come and heal him. But the soldier knew he wasn't worthy of Jesus coming to his house.

And in verse 8, the centurion answered and said, Lord, I'm not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof. Just speak the word. Just say the word. And my servant shall be healed.

He knew Jesus had power enough to simply speak the word and to make it happen. He knew that it wasn't a touch. He knew that he was powerful. He was God. And he could speak.

And it could happen all the way across in his house. In verse 9, he said, I'm a man under authority. I understand these things. I tell a guy to come and he comes. I tell a guy to go and he goes.

[13 : 18] I tell a guy to do this and he does it. And I know you can just command that he'll be healed. And when Jesus saw that great faith, he said, I have not found, verse 10, I have not found so great faith.

No, not in Israel. I've been all over Israel, been preaching to everybody and nobody believes like this Roman centurion believes. This is an unreal faith. Not often does the Bible act like Jesus was surprised or marveled or Jesus was impressed by it.

But this guy's faith impressed him. In chapter 8 and verse 11, he gives us this wonderful promise. Because almost everybody sitting in this room, we're all Gentiles.

We're not the select people. We're not the chosen people. And there was in the Jewish mind that God had his people and everybody else were dogs. You were either born Jew or you were an inferior race.

And that gets all of us. There was a racism, a nationalism among these Jews. But in chapter 8 and verse 11, Jesus says, guess what? I've got big plans for Gentiles.

[14 : 21] Look at chapter 8 and verse 11. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. I'm going to bring in some centurions.

I'm going to bring in some Gentiles. I'm going to bring in people from the east and people from the west. I'm going to bring in people that will come in from all over the place and they will sit down. And by the way, Jewish people will be on the outside.

Look at verse 12. He said, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out in doubt or darkness. God has a plan for us. Today we're enjoying that plan. Today you and I sit here in this service with a Bible in our hands that God gave us through the Jewish nation.

We preach about a Savior that God gave us through the Jewish nation. We have the Bible. We have the Word of God. We have the church. And all of it started with those Jewish people. And we didn't even count. But today God has allowed us to be a part.

You're not too far from God. You came this morning. You don't know Jesus. You think you wouldn't fit in. You think I'm not a religious person. I'm not a churchy person. I'm not that kind of guy.

[15 : 21] God had a plan. And all the way back in Matthew 8, 11, He said, I got a plan. And by the way, His servant was healed at that very time. Look at chapter 8 and verse 13. And Jesus said unto the sectarian, go thy way.

As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And His servant was healed the selfsame hour. It's beautiful. Two times it's happened now. He touches him and immediately he was healed.

He prays and asks God to heal his servant. And the servant is healed in the same hour. The first one was a leper who has no right to come near anybody and no one else. The fact is, one man, one of the old religious Jewish leaders said, If a leper walks down the street where they're selling eggs that I might buy, I won't use them.

He breathed on them. And Jesus allows him to come. And Jesus touches him and Jesus heals you. I don't care who you are. I don't care what you've done. I don't care what your past is.

You're no worse than a leper come to Jesus today. I don't care what your nationality is, what your skin color is, what your language level is, whatever it is. That Gentile got saved and God had a plan for them.

[16 : 27] And then he takes them to the third person. And that's a woman. Look if you would in chapter 8 and verse 14. A woman's needs are being met. And when Jesus was coming to Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid and sick of a fever.

And he touched her hand and the fever left her and he arose and ministered unto them. She arose and ministered unto them. And when the evening was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils. And he cast out the spirits with his word and healed all that were sick.

Now we know that Peter, our first pope, supposedly, was married. He had a mother-in-law. You might want to underline that.

You might want to underline that in verse 14. His wife's mother. So Peter had a wife and he had a mother-in-law. And nobody would have a mother-in-law without a wife. Amen? Nor would we want to. Say amen.

By the way, the story, Peter's in Capernaum. And Peter's house has moved, but he moved where God was working. How often do we see God's people move without knowing where God is working?

[17 : 30] How often do we consider our business more important than getting where God is working? Peter's uprooted his entire family and moved to Capernaum. There he is. We know the story here that the leper asked to be healed.

We know that the centurion beseeched or begged to be healed. And when we get to the lady here, the family and friends asked Peter's wife to heal him. And he touches her, which is not what you do with sick people, especially in that day.

Look at chapter 8 and verse 15. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and ministered unto them. Now you've got to understand, women, sorry, they were considered less than people.

They were considered less than men. Jewish men proudly prayed, God, glad I'm not a woman. Glad I'm not a Gentile. I'm glad I'm not a leper. They had all these things they were so proud of.

But Jesus has elevated the place of a woman in all through history. And he's brought a woman up. And here in the story, here's a woman in need. And Jesus cares and meets her needs.

[18 : 33] Even in your society today, it's not been 100 years yet since women got the right to vote. But Jesus cared about women. And 2,000 years ago, Jesus had his people write in his book that women were our co-equals, our co-heirs before God.

And here Jesus is saying, I don't care who you are. I don't care if you're a boy. I don't care if you're a girl. I don't care if you're black or white or red or green. I don't care if you're a different nation. And I don't care what disease you got.

I love you. That's what's going on. This morning, I want you to know Jesus loves you. You did not come into a service today to hear that there was something special for another group of people.

It's for all of us. I think I find myself in that category of lepers. I know who I was. I know what my sin was before Jesus. I think I find myself in that group of foreigners. I wasn't born Jewish.

And I wasn't born into the family of God. I had to be born again into the family of God. I think I know what it's like to be the woman in this story, to be a person that might not be the most respected, could not be the most lifted up person, but Jesus cares.

[19 : 35] He cares. It doesn't matter what your social status is. It doesn't matter how you rank. Jesus loves you. Trust Him. Come to Him.

Believe Him for salvation. That's what happens in the story. That's what happens in the story. Look at verse 16, if you would. And evening was come, and they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils.

And He cast out the spirits with His word and healed all the people that were sick. Do you understand what He's saying? There's a story now. We've gone from a leper, as bad as you can get.

We've gone to a Gentile soldier. That's pretty bad. We've gone to a woman who's just a lady that can be used and healed, and God does that. And now it's nighttime.

Time for Him to take a break. And everybody in town starts showing up. And He's casting out devils. And He's healing the sick. He cares. He cares.

[20 : 34] You came this morning. You came hurting. You came this morning, and you came not knowing if somebody cared about you. You came not knowing if you could ever be in, ever be accepted, ever have salvation, ever be one that He would care about.

And here's the answer today. Nobody is too far from God. Nobody. It doesn't matter what you've done in the past. It doesn't matter where you were born.

It doesn't matter what language you speak. It doesn't matter. He cares and died on a cross to save every one of us. There's one more verse I want you to consider with me.

Look at chapter 8, verse 17. Jesus is doing what He does. He has taken their sickness and their sin on Him. Look at verse 17.

8, 17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet. That's what that word is, Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.

[21 : 33] Jesus took our infirmities, our sicknesses, and He bare our sicknesses. That quote comes from Isaiah 53, 4. You might mark that in the margin of your Bible.

Write that down. That's what He's quoting. Matthew has gone back to the book of Isaiah and He's quoted it. And here's what the verse says. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Look at the verse, if you would. He carried our griefs. He carried our sin. He carried our sickness. He carried our sorrows. We saw Him smitten of God.

We saw Him stricken of God. We saw God let sin take out all of its wrath and all of its punishment on Jesus. In verse 5, Isaiah 53, 5. He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by stripes we were healed. You see, what God did was this. He said, Austin, you messed up.

[22 : 33] And leper, you messed up. And Roman soldier, you messed up. And Peter's mother-in-law, you messed up. Everybody's messed up. But Jesus came and said, I will bear your problems.

He was wounded for my transgressions. My rule-breaking was put on Jesus. He was bruised for my twisted, devious, wicked heart. He was chastised to bring peace to me.

His stripes bring healing to me so I can be saved. Verse 6 says in Isaiah 53, 6. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone into his own way.

And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Look at the verse. Every one of us, knowing what God wanted, we have chosen to do what we want. We've chosen to live life our way.

It doesn't mean you live it like some wicked sinner. It doesn't mean you live it like anybody else. But you chose your way over his way. You chose your way over God's way. And you went your own way. You got off the path.

[23 : 28] You did what you wanted to do. You might have been the most wonderful, sweet person. But you chose your way over his way. You chose his way over your way. And here's what God did.

You messed up. You got off track. And so God took all of your sin. And all of your mess. And all of your problem. He took your leprosy. He took your servant with palsy.

He took the fever of a mother-in-law. He took every demon-controlled person in that path. He took all their sin. And he laid it all on Jesus. That's how we get saved. We get saved by what Jesus did.

Though Jesus was healing physical problems, his real ministry was to rescue people from sin. He uses that analogy of being sick to explain salvation and need the Savior.

He makes a comment, Those that are well, they don't need a doctor. If you're well, you don't need a doctor. He knew that he was come to rescue us from our sins. This is a promise of healing.

[24 : 26] It's not a promise of healing, but it's a promise of salvation for all. Nobody is too far from God this morning. Nobody. All people are spiritually sick.

That's a big lesson for us to learn. Every person on the planet is spiritually sick. Everybody needs a Savior. To be healed and saved, you must believe on Jesus Christ.

This is a life or death issue. You'll either trust Jesus and live, or you'll not trust Jesus and die. You'll either trust Jesus and have eternal life, or not trust Jesus and have eternal death.

Will you today come to the one that can heal and save you? Will you believe? Will you come asking like they did? They came asking.

They came humbly. They came believing. They came confidently looking to Him. Whoever you are, wherever you are, there's help for you. The door is open.

[25 : 25] You must decide, will you believe, or will you reject this offer of salvation? This morning, I don't know who you are. Maybe you're like the leper, and your sins are so wicked and vile and loathsome, that they stink and smell in your own nostrils, and you know no one in their right mind would love you.

No one in their right mind, if they knew you like you really are, no one would accept you. But Jesus would. Maybe you come this morning and you say, hey, I'm just not the accepted group of people.

I don't fit in. I'm not a Jew. I'm not the religious crowd. I'm not the church crowd. I'm not the church-going group. I'm just not who I am. He's already accepted that centurion. He will accept you.

Maybe you come and you say, I'm just a mother-in-law. That's all I am. I'm not exactly the most popular person on the planet. He will accept you and save you and love you today. He doesn't want anyone to go to hell.

Jesus carries everyone's sin on him. He will pay your sin debt. He has paid your sin debt. The gift is yours to have if you'll believe. But you will have to realize this.

[26 : 31] You have sinned against the Holy God. You are a long ways off. You are not accepted on your own. And there's nothing you can do to fix this situation but come to Jesus.

There's nothing you can do. You cannot get baptized enough. You can't join enough churches. You can't do enough good stuff. You can't give enough money. You're in bad shape.

We're all, we were all in bad shape. And Jesus and Jesus alone saves. So I have a question for you today. Who are you? Where are you?

Where have you been? What have you done? How bad do you feel? How far away do you feel like you are? Well, no one is too far away. No one is in a group of people he doesn't love.

No one. All of us can today know for sure we go to heaven if we die. All of us can know that our sins are forgiven. And I'm inviting you today to trust Jesus. Would you bow your heads with me?

[27 : 30] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.