



## The Ministry of the King in Matthew: "I Will; be thou Clean!"

August 5, 2018

TODAY'S TEXT: MATTHEW 8:1-4

**Mat 8:1 (ESV) *When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him.***

- After finishing the sermon on the Mount, the crowd who heard him continued to follow Him.
- Interestingly, many things in His Sermon may have been difficult to hear and receive for His audience. Recall that the people were astonished! As we said, "The word for "astonished" can also mean "to strike out, to expel by a blow." The people weren't just casually interested; they were stunned! They were flabbergasted. They were overwhelmed. They were blown away!"
- Nevertheless, "great multitudes" continued to follow Him.
- Recall that "great multitudes" gathered initially to hear Him because He...

*"...went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan." Mat 4:23-25 (KJV)*

- As we observe the ministry of the King thus far in Matthew:
  1. After the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3), He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matt 4:1). He was tempted according to the devil's common playbook; the lust of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life.
  2. After His time of testing, He began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt 4:17)
  3. As He preached, He began gathering His team of disciples (Matt 4:18-22).
  4. He then set about "teaching, preaching, and healing."
  5. This of course, drew a crowd. So He taught them Kingdom fundamentals (Matt 5-7).
  6. He then continued to teach and heal (Matt 8:1-4), and as we'll see continually does battle with unclean spirits.
- What a wonderful pattern of kingdom life to observe!
- Jesus saves us and baptizes us. We are excited about this of course! But so often times of testing follow soon after, where are faith is tested and we do battle with the enemy of our souls.
- He calls us to preach an unpopular message: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He calls us to work with other people to accomplish the kingdom mission. And praise God, sometimes this results in popularity.
- But we must still come down from the mountain and attempt to touch the hurting individual.

- My point: Be encouraged! Testing is a part of the process! Success is a part of the process! Trial is a part of the process! Learning to work with others is a part of the process! Doing battle with devils is a part of the process! Keep reaching! Keep teaching! Keep praying for God's power to release people who are in bondage!

**Mat 8:2 (ESV) And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."**

- In ancient Israel, the skin disease known as leprosy was considered "unclean."
- In Hebrew, the word for leprosy means "a smiting" or "a stroke" because "the disease was regarded as a direct providential infliction." -Easton
- In the Old Testament, most lepers were to be put outside the camp of Israel (Num 5:1-4) and had to announce their "unclean" presence so others could stay away from them:

*Lev 13:45-46 (KJV) And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. 46 All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.*

- Leprosy both **humiliated** AND **separated** the afflicted from others. It created a lonely, despondent, and hopeless life. Imagine the leper's desperation as he came and knelt before Jesus!
- Oh that unsaved men might see their condition as "spiritual lepers" and seek the feet of the Master! Oh that even those of us who are saved might continually hate the residue of such sin in our lives and cry out for Jesus' continual cleansing!

#### THE WILL OF GOD AND HEALING

- I love that the leper essentially said, "LORD if it be thy will, heal me!"
- In April 2016 as we worked through James 5, we preached a message called, ["A Biblical Perspective on Healing."](#)
- In that message, we said:

*God can and does heal! In a very real sense, all healing is divine. As creator, God engineered our bodies to heal. It's actually quite amazing how, if taken care of, our bodies will heal "naturally" through processes God designed. God also heals through medicines. Paul told Timothy for example, to drink a little wine for his frequent stomach and other ailments. Sometimes God uses physicians. Jesus taught they would be needed (Matt 9:12). Luke was a doctor (Col 4:14).*

*God also heals miraculously! We don't believe there is anything in Scripture that prevents God from healing miraculously today. We believe in divine healing.*

*Yet we must also be clear that it is not always God's will to heal. This is where it can get difficult for us to understand but it is clear from Scripture that sometimes God's plan is not to heal on earth, but in heaven. Paul's thorn was not healed. He eventually had his head removed in Rome for His faith in Jesus. Trophimus was left sick at Miletus (2 Tim 4:20). Most of the Apostles were martyred.*

*If God always chose to heal, we'd never die. Yet death is appointed for all unless He returns first. In understanding divine healing, we run almost immediately into God's loving sovereignty. This is why when suffering we must pray (James 5:13). God, in His mercy, often helps us understand His plan, or at a minimum, rest in His sufficient grace. Indeed, this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us (1 John 5:14).*

**Mat 8:3 (ESV) And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.**

- Our LORD was willing and the man was cleansed! We believe He's still a healer!
- McDonald writes, "Lepers were untouchables. Physical contact with them might expose a person to infection. In the case of the Jews, this contact made the person ceremonially unclean, that is, unfit to worship with the congregation of Israel. But when Jesus touched the leper and spoke the healing words, the leprosy vanished immediately. **Our Savior has power to cleanse from sin and to qualify the cleansed person to be a worshiper.**"
- Hallelujah! Friends, you can trust Jesus with your most sensitive issues and hurtful illnesses. Are you willing to boldly but humbly make your way through *the crowd of the world, the flesh, and the devil* to ask, "LORD, will you heal me?"

**Mat 8:4 (ESV) And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."**

- What kind of counsel can we receive from this verse?
- Most theologians agree that Jesus' wasn't condemning enthusiasm about Him; it was an issue of timing.
- His ministry had just began and much had to transpire before the Via Dolorosa road (road to the Cross). Christ may not have wanted people to try to make Him a political ruler because of His power over sickness.
- MacArthur writes: "Publicity over such miracles might hinder Christ's mission and divert public attention from His message. Mark records that this is precisely what happened. In this man's exuberance over the miracle, he disobeyed; as a result, Christ had to move His ministry away from the city and into the desert regions (Mark 1:45)."
- I think there is another point we might consider however.
- Jesus was interested in not only alleviating the man's physical suffering; he was also interested in healing him of emotional pain.
- *Going to the priest with the prescribed offering before telling anyone may have been the LORD's way of causing the man to obey the Scriptures and be pronounced ceremonially clean. Perhaps he wanted a man to be able to rejoin his family and his community.*
- The church father Chrysostom said, "It was an ancient law that the leper when cleansed should not entrust the recognition of his cleansing to private judgment but should show himself to the priest. By this means it would be confirmed in his own eyes, and he could then be numbered among the clean. For if the priest had not corroborated it, he would have remained outside the camp among the unclean."
- So many people feel as if their healing or their blessing qualifies them to live outside the structure God has set up. This never results in long-term joy. God remains a God of order, and that order is for our good.

## PRAYERS FOR YOU!

I imagine this man, once shunned and mocked, eating dinner with his family that night and celebrating with his friends the mercies and goodness of God.

Have you been healed? Have you been set free? Did your blessing cause you to run TO family and church or away?

May the good and perfect gift of God add sweetness to your relationships. May the healing of Christ manifest in your life and inspire fresh obedience and love. May you become a conduit for the Lord's mercies to the spiritual leprous that they might find grace and help in the time of need.

## APPLICATIONS FOR EDIFICATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

(ROM 14:19; EPH 4:9; 1 THES 5:11; JUDE 1:20)

1. Discuss the reality of leprosy in ancient Israel. What must life have been like for the leper?
2. Certain sins can create an attitude of disgust. Although this is understandable, if not checked, this attitude can hinder our desire to share the Gospel. Discuss your attitude toward sin and the sinner.
3. From last week:
  - Were you more aware this week of the lost and hurting around you?
  - Have you “followed-up” with anyone this week?
  - Who have you walked into church membership? Feel free to use this tool:  
[www.crcchesapeake.org/10reasonswhy](http://www.crcchesapeake.org/10reasonswhy)