

Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 21 June 2020

Opening Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 299

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in a believer's ear!
It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds
and drives away our fear.

2 It makes the wounded spirit whole,
and calms each heart oppressed;
it's manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary rest.

3 Dear name, the rock on which I build,
my shield and hiding-place;
my never-failing treasury, filled
with boundless stores of grace!

4 By you my prayers acceptance gain,
although with sin defiled;
Satan accuses me in vain
since I am God's own child.

5 Jesus, my shepherd, brother, friend,
my Prophet, Priest and King,
my Lord, my life, my way, my end,
accept the praise I bring.

6 Weak is the effort of my heart,
and cold my warmest thought;
but when I see you as you are,
I'll praise you as I ought.

7 Till then I would your love proclaim
with every fleeting breath;
and may the music of your name
refresh my soul in death.

John Newton (1725-1807)

Hymn: Praise! 305

Jesus shall take the highest honour.
Jesus shall take the highest praise.
Let all earth join heaven in exalting
the name which is above all other names.
Let's bow the knee in humble adoration,
for at his name every knee must bow.
Let every tongue confess
he is Christ, God's only Son:
Sovereign Lord, we give you glory now.

*For all honour and blessing and power
belong to you, belong to you.
All honour and blessing and power
belong to you, belong to you,
Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of the living God.*

Chris Bowater

Prayer

Reading: Matthew 8:1-17, ESV

When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. ² And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ 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."

⁵ When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶ "Lord, my servant is lying paralysed at home, suffering terribly." ⁷ And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." ⁸ But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go', and he goes, and to another, 'Come', and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this', and he does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he marvelled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. ¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

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¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

¹⁴ And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. ¹⁶ That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

Hymn: Praise! 315

Meekness and majesty,
manhood and deity,
in perfect harmony,
the man who is God.
Lord of eternity
dwells in humanity,
kneels in humility
and washes our feet.

*O, what a mystery,
meekness and majesty,
bow down and worship,
for this is your God,
this is your God.*

2 Father's pure radiance,
perfect in innocence,
yet learns obedience
to death on a cross.
Suffering to give us life,
conquering through sacrifice;
and as they crucify
prays, 'Father, forgive.'

O, what a mystery...

3 Wisdom unsearchable,
God the invisible;
love indestructible
in frailty appears.
Lord of infinity
stooping so tenderly
lifts our humanity
to the heights of his throne.

*O, what a mystery,
meekness and majesty,
bow down and worship,
for this is your God,
this is your God,
this is your God.*

Graham Kendrick

Sermon: Matthew 8:1-17 – The Authority of Jesus over Disease

“This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our illnesses and bore our diseases.’” (v17)

Lockdown - a bit of a novelty, soon became a real challenge. It is all rather frustrating and can lead us to wonder who it is who's really in charge.

We don't like the idea of not being in control – or worse, of feeling like we have no control over our circumstances; that we are helpless.

The gospel shows us that although we aren't in control of the events of the world, the one who is, is kind and good and loving. Not only that, it also shows that we can know him! We can call him “Father” and we can come to him honestly and tell him how we feel, knowing that he hears and answers us.

In our verses, we see that Jesus demonstrates His authority over illness on three separate occasions for a specific purpose - verse 17: This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our illnesses and bore our diseases."

Matthew wants us to see the link between these miracles in Matthew chapter 8 and Jesus' substitutionary death at Calvary. Jesus has the authority bring in the marginalised and to deal with the root cause of all suffering, sin. This means that not only can his power and authority never fail, but also that we can trust him completely.

1. Jesus has authority to cleanse

The word “clean” is an important one in Matthew's Gospel.

The first person Jesus heals – a man who is afflicted with leprosy. In Leviticus, we read that skin conditions aren't simply a fleshly illness, but actually a spiritual pollution. Lepers were seen as unclean, even cursed by God (Numbers 12:10). It required social distancing!

It is the man who approaches Jesus – something lepers were strictly forbidden from doing: "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean" (2). He knows that Jesus can heal him, but is Jesus willing to heal him?

There is a distinction between Jesus' sovereign power and His sovereign will.

In Matthew 8, the answer is “yes”. However, when Paul was afflicted with his “thorn in the flesh” in 2 Corinthians 12, the Lord was not willing to heal. He told Paul that the reason He wouldn't heal him was so that Paul would know the strength and sufficiency of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul had to trust both the power and the wisdom of God when faced with this affliction.

The Lord knows what will bring Him the most glory and do us the most good. God can bring an end to all that we are enduring at the moment and if he chooses to, it will be at exactly the right time.

Extraordinary action: verse 3, 'And Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I will, be clean!"' Jesus didn't need to touch the man to heal him but he chose to. Jesus is physically identifying with the man; He identifies with his uncleanness so that He can make the leper clean.

All of us stand before Christ made dirty by the stain of sin. We know that we stand guilty, unclean and unworthy before a holy God. But on the cross, Jesus identified with our uncleanness. He came, as a human to take our sin and shame onto Himself in order to make us clean.

Why does He tell people to stay quiet about what He's done?

Jesus' goal in these miracles was not to advertise Himself as some sort of wonder worker. He'd rather come to save sinners. His goal wasn't temporary affirmation but to deliver his people to eternal salvation.

2. Jesus has authority to heal

For the Jews, the Centurion was the wrong man, from the wrong race, in the wrong uniform.

"Lord, my servant is lying paralysed at home, suffering terribly."v6

Believers call Jesus "Lord" while unbelievers call Him "teacher" or "rabbi".

As soon as Jesus surprisingly offers to go and see the man's servant in the Gentile's house, the centurion confesses that he is not worthy even for Jesus to enter his home. He knows that all Jesus has to do is speak and the healing will happen.

"Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith." (10).

Faith is not something that is inherited from your family, it isn't something that comes from attending a church – good as those advantages are. Faith is rather, a humble trust in the authority of Jesus.

He recognised the authority of Jesus and his own inadequacy next to Him. This was true humility.

Jesus had the same – or indeed, even greater – authority over disease. All Jesus had to do was speak to the paralysis and it was gone. Jesus has absolute authority over disease.

Even Jesus' disciples hadn't understood Jesus' power and authority by this point.

Verses 11-12: "I tell you, many will come from the east and the west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus is declaring that there will be people from all nations – that is people who are not ethnically Jewish – who come to know Him, who like the centurion will show saving faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who will willingly submit to His authority and Lordship.

A sobering reminder for us of the importance of a personal faith in Christ – no-one is saved by proxy – we must have a personal faith and trust in Jesus.

Faith is the essential determining factor in a person's eternal destiny. The question posed by the example of the centurion, is: "do you know Jesus for yourself? Have you come to Him for forgiveness and now seek to live under His authority?"

Your eternal destiny depends not on how good or bad you are or what you have or haven't done or are doing, but on your humble trust in the authority of Lord Jesus Christ to save you from your sins and to rule over you as Lord of your life. And all who trust in Him like this, regardless of ethnicity or background, upbringing or past failure will be welcomed to feast at the King's table for ever.

3. Jesus has authority over all suffering

Verses 14-15 - "And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him."

In those days, women were viewed as second-class citizens. Touching a woman's hand would make a person unclean or unholy. Touching a woman with a fever was even worse. Jesus defies all that is expected of a Jew by the traditions and practices of the day and demonstrates His true authority over illness, tradition and holiness.

Matthew says: That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases." (16-17).

Isaiah says: But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; 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 every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

By connecting Jesus' healing ministry with what is said in Isaiah 53, Matthew is doing something far more profound – He is showing that Jesus has the authority to overcome all of our suffering. Jesus has this power because He paid the price to overcome our sin. That's the point of the cross.

In Genesis 1-2, there was no suffering. It was paradise. Sin and suffering entered the world in Genesis 3. So when Jesus came to die, He didn't come to deal with the fruit of the problem alone – suffering – but its very root, sin.

These miracles point to a greater reality – the fullness of God's Kingdom, when Christ fully and finally asserts His reign and authority over all the earth.

The Bible nowhere says that if you're a Christian, someone who's been saved from your sins, then you won't ever get ill. Christ has dealt with the root of sin, but we still live in a world where its effects are keenly felt. All things are under the authority of Jesus.

Meditate on the fact that there is a day coming when death, mourning, crying and pain will be no more (Rev 21:4). On that day, we will have glorious, resurrection bodies which will never break down or wear

out. That day is guaranteed because Jesus paid for it all for you on the cross. Trust and rejoice in the authority of Jesus.

Hymn: Praise! 291

Christ triumphant, ever reigning,

Saviour, Master, King!

Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing.

Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown,
the eternal name.

2 Word incarnate, truth revealing,

Son of man on earth:

power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth.

Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown,
the eternal name.

3 Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,

victim crucified!

death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified.

Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown,
the eternal name.

4 Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!

sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love.

Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown,
the eternal name.

5 So, our hearts and voices raising

through the ages long,

ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song.

Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown,
the eternal name.

Michael Saward

Closing Prayer