

Being Healed and Being Saved

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[0:00] Okay, thanks Daniel. Folks, let's pray as we get into this passage together and ask for God's help. Lord, we thank you that you are a God who has revealed yourself! Father, thank you that you speak through what you have spoken.

And as we turn to your word now, we pray that we would encounter you, the living God. Father, be with us, we ask. Teach us what we know not. Help us see what we see not. Help us hear what we hear not.

May we leave this morning changed because we've met with you. And we pray all of these things in Jesus' worthy name. Amen. Amen. Folks, Matthew chapter 4, verse 23. Have we got it there?

Here's what I want us to see as we get into this passage together. I want us to appreciate that this is bad news for all of us here today who work in the healthcare profession.

So doctors, GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists, midwives, pharmacists, speech therapists, take your pick.

[1:08] What this is ultimately telling you is that Jesus has ultimately come to make you surplus to requirements. Have you got the passage open in front of you?

Do you see this? You're not going to want to miss this. Because nothing like this has ever happened before. If you grant me a little bit poetic license here.

Take this in. That there once was a moment in history, as it were, when the corridors of the Galilee Royal Infirmary were completely deserted.

A time when you could hear a pin drop in the A&E; department. A time when surgeons had no one on the operating table. When puzzled nurses were shouting people's names into the corridors, into the waiting rooms, and no one was there to respond.

When receptionists were scratching their heads because the phones weren't ringing. When ambulance drivers were twiddling their thumbs, opting for another round at Candy Crush on their phone because there was nothing to do.

[2:23] And everybody's sitting there thinking to themselves, what on earth is going on? Do you see it? Of course, what was going on?

Verse 17. Was that the kingdom of God had come near. Do you see it? Verse 17. And it had come near because the king of the kingdom had rolled into town.

Now, if you've been here over the last number of weeks, we've been tracking in Matthew's gospel this big theme that Matthew's been driving home to his readers, that Jesus, the king, is here.

Now, Jesus, verse 17, has announced, do you see it? The presence of the kingdom. Do you see it? The kingdom of God is here. What you have to say is a big claim.

It's how people talk in our world today, isn't it? When people make big claims. You're all talk, mate. Right?

[3 : 30] You're all talk. You can't back it up. Classic you, over-promising, under-delivering. Put your money where your mouth is. We've got tons of phrases like that in our culture, don't we, where we say to people, can you back this up?

And the question is, I think, in Matthew's gospel, when Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is here, can he back it up? Well, what follows here, Jesus announces the presence of the kingdom, and here he is demonstrating the power of the kingdom.

Do you remember last week, he was calling random fishermen to leave it behind and be fishers of men? Do you remember that, what he said? Follow me, was his big claim.

Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And I imagine that Matthew's Jewish readers, they make the link in their head. They think, whoa, what did God say to Abraham in Genesis 12, Genesis 15?

He said, go. In other words, follow me. And here is Jesus saying the exact same thing. Follow me. To put me first, above family, above career, above fame, to allow me to mould your life, to learn from me, to repent of your old ways, and come out, and follow me.

[4 : 56] And Jesus doesn't do compartmentalisation. It's a massive word for you this morning. All of life, we follow him.

It's the call he makes. And you maybe hear that, and you think, goodness, that's a bit punchy, is it not? It's a big ask. I get the Sunday thing.

I get the songs of praise thing. But actually following you with all of my life? Well, if you're in any doubt about the credentials, and the abilities of this king, then see him in action this week.

This week, diseases will flee, and evil spirits will be banished, as he bursts on the scene. Now let's just track with the narrative here.

Do you see verse 23? Remember, Jesus is in Galilee. We thought a few weeks ago about this land of Zebulun and Naphtali, the land of great darkness. Right?

[5 : 59] And this is not Aberdeen, 21 days without the sun. What is going on here is spiritual, and physical, historical darkness.

Right? Jesus has stepped into this place. This is the place where God had said, light would dawn. In this place. And see the two verbs that Matthew uses to describe what Jesus is doing here.

Do you see he is preaching? Do you see it? And he is healing. And then I want you to notice, do you see the words there? All and every.

Do you see it? Verse 23. Do you see it in the text? Every disease. All who were sick. So that word, those words, all and every. Just slip them in your back pocket. We're going to come back to this in about 20 minutes time.

All and every. What is Matthew doing here? He's showing us the completeness, the wholeness of Jesus' healing ministry. Notice two quick things about it.

[7 : 04] Notice, first of all, the reach of the news. Do you see how news about him spread? Where did it spread? Galilee. This is the region. Synagogues. And all over the vast Roman province of Syria, which is located in the map there to the north of Galilee.

So here's the point. This is not a news story that's being picked up by a local gazette. Give it a single column. How does something like this spread in this day, before X, before Instagram, how does it spread?

By word of mouth. Right? So what, that tells you what Jesus is doing here. Because people have never seen anything like this before.

It is spreading all over the place. And little wonder, see verse 24, Matthew tell us how people responded to that news. I love what's recorded at verse 24.

And take this in today. And they brought to him. Now, Josie kind of stole my point in the prayer if you notice it and picked it up.

[8 : 19] What does Jesus do with the power that he has? In contrast to everything that we're seeing in our world just now about what people do with the power that they have, what does Jesus do with the power that he has?

He uses it to serve. And they brought to him. What does that tell us? Do you not love what that tells us about Jesus? That he came to earth not intent on retreating to some kind of monastic existence?

This tells you that Jesus made himself available. Do you love that? Jesus made himself available. People were brought to him and he healed them.

Not in some kind of Dumbledore style just casting a spell and a big boom of light goes everywhere and everybody's healed. The implication here, I take it, is that he does this one by one.

And is that not so incredible? Are we not so used to spending our lives living them like we do listen to our podcasts on 1.5 speed?

[9 : 33] What do they call New York? The city that never sleeps. We are busy. If there was one word that you were using to describe your life right now to the person next to you, that would be it, right? Busy? Do you know the word, the adjective that I love most to describe Jesus?

Unhurried. We were thinking in growth groups this week about how that's such a profound way to love the people that we rub shoulders with every day by taking the time to learn names, by taking the time to learn about family, about things that they love, that they care about.

I take it that Jesus sets us a wonderful example here. Notice the reach of the news but then secondly notice the breadth of the miracles. Do you see verse 24?

This is what we need to see. I hadn't really seen this before until studying it this week because we're so used to skimming over this. Reading the Bible at 1.5 speed did this really help me slow down?

I hadn't seen before verse 24 that Matthew doesn't settle for generic descriptions. Right? Just in case anyone is tempted to do what C.S. Lewis famously called chronological snobbery.

[10 : 47] Popular my day to think that we're so much more sophisticated than people were back then and yeah sure medicine has made huge advances but it's as if Matthew says at this point chill out millennial.

We were perceptive enough back in this day to see the difference between all these things and I've written it down so that you would know because do you see how he both details and he differentiates?

Do you see the stuff there? Just roll with the descriptions those suffering severe pain and notice the compassion that's contained in that description. The demon possessed those having seizures and the paralyzed so this is both physical and demonic and it's as if pausing for breath having given you that list Matthew summarizes at the end of verse 24 and he bookends this little bit with that phrase and he healed them and he healed them and so the Galilean royal infirmary was completely deserted.

What a time to be alive and see as true as that is this raises all sorts of questions and emotions doesn't it as we read it today?

Three Ps I imagine my question to you is which P are you? Right? As we react to this some of us will be puzzled this sounds like hocus pocus what on earth is going on here?

[12:26] Others of us will be pained why hasn't this happened for me or for that person who I I dearly loved in my life? Others of us will be pining along for something like this to be true in my life.

Which one are you? Puzzled pained pining and I think that's why we need to get our heads around what this says and what it isn't and what Matthew really wants us to see is he portrays Jesus here so here's two things that these miracles are firstly they are tasters they're tasters right?

I remember being in Kentucky in America a few years ago with a family we went to Disney afterwards I kind of described Disney as plastic America Kentucky was proper America sitting in the back porch James Taylor on in the background sipping a little bit of bourbon do you know what made it for me though?

Was watching the fireflies I'd never seen a firefly before they all laughed at me don't want to say you've never seen a midget before and I laugh at them but never seen a firefly before but what's going on here friends is that every single one of these miracles is a firefly in the night sky just a brilliant flash of the light invading the darkness I guess this is a bit like when you go to an ice cream shop and they give you those little spoons do you know and you just get a little taster of what the real thing is going to be like these momentary flashes as evil and darkness are dispelled by the king as he demonstrates his lordship over sin over Satan over death as Jesus as you if you like gives people their lives back this is tasters of what Jesus will do fully and finally one day when he returns you know one person

I listened to insightfully referred to these miracles as an eschatological thunderbolt get your head around that and here's where our biblical worldview comes in here how we understand this world God created a good world sin and death were not a thing mankind created to enjoy and flourish and worship the God our creator who made us but because of the rebellion that poison of sin and death has affected all things all things are experiencing that sense of deterioration including our bodies we live our lives in this broken in this fractured in this groaning in this dark world carrying that deep sense within us that we can't wait to get home I always loved

[15:41] Jewel the unicorn in the last battle CS Lewis I've come home at last this is my real country I belong here this is the land I've been looking for all my life though I never knew it until now maybe that's you here today in particular that longing that you have friends Christ meets you in this moment and says those longings I've come to make a way think about that a bit more in a minute here is Jesus as it were putting the effects of that fall into reverse gear can God heal today should we pray for healing today I take it that this is a different time as we see in a minute these miracles the all and the every authenticates Jesus as the king of heaven but I take it of course God can might not be in the same way it might be miraculous leaving surgeons scratching their head to a friend of mine really recently down in

Bristol but he may do it through the ordinary means of grace through the wonderful health care system that we enjoy in this country which means that meds and plans are God's kindness to us and if you're in the health care profession doing that know that that's a wonderful calling that you have but the thing is in his goodness that we've been singing about earlier in his kindness he may not but we trust him and we love him and I take it like Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego as they were remember that story in Daniel as they're about to get thrown in the fire our God will deliver us but even if he doesn't we'll still praise him for who he is and I take it as a church in these moments in people's lives because we love one another we step up in those moments and we're there for each other and you can be an extension of God's mercy by offering people your ear and praying Lord help us all in this moment to know your heart and your purposes in a deeper way.

Do you see how we can be people who can as it were spiritually bring people to him? Do you see that? we can be those who bring to him people we can bring to him because he's an available savior.

Our cries knowing that our groans they ring out under the banner of a resurrected king. And here's the pastoral point.

You know the miracles of Jesus are amazing but they are momentary because everyone even in this scene every one of these people healed would at some point die again.

[18:32] Now what does that tell you? It tells you that there's a bigger game that we're playing in here. It tells you that there's something better and more permanent and lasting than being healed in this life.

What is going on in our understanding of the world according to the Bible is that we know God's intention is to reclaim and remake this whole world for himself.

There is coming a time when his dominion will stretch from shore to shore and the knowledge of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Do you see how the gospel doesn't just give us an ending? the gospel gives us a purpose for existence. Why were we made?

We were made to worship and know and enjoy our God and give him all the praise and thanks. And do you see how Jesus spiritually as it were when we come to follow him he gives us spiritually speaking our lives back.

[19:42] We creates us for the very purpose the very thing that we were designed to do. there will be no healings in the new heavens and the new earth. Did you pick it up in the reading? Why?

Because there will be nothing left to heal. And this is a little taster of the final kingdom that Jesus will fully and finally usher in when he returns.

When this king returns and he says to evil be gone and to tears and groans goodbye and to death good riddance.

And how will that come about? Well did you catch that in the reading from Isaiah 65? The former things will be remembered no more. Did you pick it up?

New heavens and a new earth. But did you catch how right at the end of Isaiah 65 there's talk there and blink and you might have missed it of the dust being the serpent's food.

[20:49] Now how will that come about? How will this come about? Through the work of the long promised serpent crusher that God said he would send way back in Genesis 3.

What was he going to do? He was going to crush the head of the serpent. He was going to triumph. The suffering servant. He was going to triumph over Satan.

And that's what Jesus in this gospel is going to the cross to do. To pay for our sin. To take the curse of darkness on himself.

What is one of the things Genesis 3 brings into this world? An existence of thorns and thistles. What is the crown that Jesus wears as he's led to the cross?

It's a crown of thorns. What is Christ doing in that moment as he goes to the cross? But bearing the curse that we deserve on himself. Which means if you're here today and you're asking will God completely heal me?

[21:55] If your faith is in this Christ can I tell you that the answer is wonderfully yes? It may be not just in this life but the answer is wonderfully yes.

do you see how the end of the Bible story there is an all and an every for the complete people of God and you can stake everything on it being true in the next life because of the power of this king.

Can I summarize? It's good to be healed. It's better to be saved. It's good to be healed physically.

Do you know it's better to be healed spiritually? To know sins forgiven. To be granted an identity and experience a love the likes of which we will find nowhere else.

To be given a new family. To be given a new purpose. To know the reason for our existence. this is what Jesus holds out to us today. And that's so important because we've got to see the second thing these miracles are.

[23 : 11] They are tasters. Really quickly, secondly, they are pointers. In other words, the healings that we see Jesus perform here are for a purpose.

And what is that purpose? Well, the main point of his healing ministry is to demonstrate his authority over all things. In other words, we're meant not to just look at but to look through the miracles.

Because what is Matthew's purpose for all of this? See verse 25. Large crowds from where? Galilee. Remember our map? The Decapolis, the area just to the east, is that right?

East Decapolis, non-Jewish area. Jerusalem, Judea, and the area across the Jordan. So this is a people that Christ is gathering to himself, following him.

What are they doing? Do you see right at the end there, verse 25? They followed him. Just as Simon and Andrew did at verse 20 and James and John did at verse 22.

[24 : 22] Do you see how Matthew just stacks them up? They followed him, they followed him, they followed him. And that's how Matthew wants us to respond to this.

Not to look at, but to look through. Do you not love that Jesus goes to places that we wouldn't expect? And he picks people that we wouldn't choose.

And he says, come follow me. You know, just as we close, let me tell you about a pal of mine, who I know through my time at Cornhill in Glasgow, his name is Terry.

Terry is the founder of a charity called Hope for Glasgow, working with people who have had their lives ruined because of addiction. And despite being a massive Celtic fan, he's the perfect guy for this job.

Because before becoming a Christian, this was his story, he lived on the streets, substance abuse, and those substances had taken his mind. Just couldn't think.

[25 : 28] Couldn't think straight. And people came and they helped him and alongside medical help, he got free of his substance abuse, totally clean, totally healed.

And as amazing as that is, and if you Google it, you'll find his testimony, as amazing as that is, he says it was just wonderful, it just felt great. He says the good news about getting clean is that I got my feelings back.

But he said the bad news about getting clean was that I got my feelings back. And all of a sudden it's a bit like sand evaporating and just going through what I was left with and everything else had gone.

I was left with emptiness and I was left with shame and I was left with guilt and I didn't know what to do with it. And in one sense I had been healed, but what I discovered in this moment is that I was addicted to all sorts of other stuff and had no answers to it.

So he goes to a local church and he says this, I had to get clean to see how dirty I really was.

[26 : 41] Goes to a local church with this in his mind and he hears for the first time the gospel, he hears about Christ Jesus, he hears about the cross and in this moment he hears about how he is a great sinner, Christ is a great saviour and in that moment he says I was converted and he now spends his life bringing that same gospel to folks who were just like him.

But here's the point, here's Terry's story, it is good to be healed but it's better to be saved. And the king here as he walks on this scene is calling us to repent and follow him.

Some of us will remember that song, we'll close with this, the old chorus. Follow him, follow him, yield your life to him. He's conquered death, he is king of kings.

Accept the joy which he gives to those who yield their lives to him. Let me pray. And so Father, we think of those three Ps.

Lord, some of us will be here, we hear this and we're puzzled. Others of us are here, we hear this and we're pained.

[28 : 07] Others of us are here, we hear this and we're pining. Lord, we thank you that we can fully trust our times to the warmest, the kindest, the most strong and powerful of saviors.

Lord, I pray that wherever this has landed in our lives today, I pray that you would bring that sense of inner healing through the knowledge of your son.

father, thank you that we look at Christ Jesus here, the one who is fully available. Thank you that he is not a saviour who came at us, as it were, at hand's length.

Thank you that here he is stepping into the place of darkness, coming alongside the people who know darkness to be the light.

Father, help us as we pray as we finish our time together to fix our eyes on him, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.