

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 32

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen explores the teachings of Jesus on healing, emphasizing the distinction between His life and ministry, and the importance of faith and scripture in understanding God's promises.

Duration: 24:27

Scripture: Isaiah 53:4, Matthew 8:14, Luke 4:40, Romans 6:14, Philippians 4:19, James 5:14

Topics: "Healing Ministry", "Faith And Forgiveness"

Description

This sermon delves into Matthew 8:14, highlighting the healing power of Jesus as seen in Peter's mother-in-law being instantly healed and serving Him. It emphasizes the personal touch Jesus gives to each individual, healing all who were sick, and the importance of acknowledging our limitations in faith. The distinction between following Jesus in life versus ministry is discussed, along with the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Jesus' healing ministry. The sermon also addresses the misconception of equating sickness with sin, emphasizing God's immediate forgiveness of sins and His varied responses to prayers.

Transcript

So today we continue our study on all that Jesus taught. And we've been going through the Gospel of Matthew. And today we come to Matthew chapter 8 and verse 14.

Matthew 8 verse 14. Jesus had come to Peter's home and he saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. And he touched her hand and the fever left her and she arose and waited on him.

This is a beautiful picture of what should be the result of the Lord touching us. I mean apply this to your own life. We're sick with sin.

And Jesus comes by and touches us and raises us up and delivers us from it. And it says as soon as she got up, she didn't wait. She immediately started serving him.

That's a beautiful picture of how it should be whenever the Lord touches us and raises us up from our sin or problems that we've been in. When evening had come, the news went around that Jesus had come and had instantly healed Peter's mother-in-law. Now the news went around and they brought to him many who were demon-possessed.

And he cast out the spirits of the world and healed all who were ill. In order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, verse 17, might be fulfilled, saying he himself took our infirmities, carried away our

diseases. Now there are a number of things we can learn here concerning what Jesus taught.

Not only as I said by his words, but by his life. It says here that they brought many to him. If you look at the parallel passage of this incident in Luke's gospel, sometimes comparing scripture with scripture, you learn something which is not mentioned in one scripture.

The same incident is repeated in Luke 4 and verse 40. And there it says, he laid his hands on every single one of them. There were many people brought.

It says here that so many were brought who were demon-possessed and sick. And instead of saying a mass prayer for all of them, it says he laid hands on each one individually. That is because he wanted each person to feel that God was interested in each of them personally.

That he gave them a personal touch. And the other thing we notice here was, it was not 1% of them that were healed, like a lot of people who claim to be imitating Jesus' healing ministry see today. Every single one was healed.

He healed all, A-L-L. Every single person who was sick was healed. This is the ministry that we see that Jesus accomplished.

Why was that? Why is it we don't see that type of thing today? The principle is what we saw earlier, as you have believed, we have to acknowledge that Jesus had total faith. And none of us have the faith that he had. We must be humble enough to acknowledge that.

I remember once I was called by a family to go and pray for their daughter who was sick. And, you know, the Bible says, I don't have a healing gift, but the Bible says that when someone calls an elder, James chapter 5 says, when someone calls an elder to pray for those who are sick, he should go, anoint them with oil, and pray. And there it says the prayer of faith will save the sick.

So I went, not as one who has a gift of healing, but as an elder obeying that command in James chapter 5. And when I went there, I saw this 16-year-old girl curled up in the bed. And they said that she was injured or had some head injury or something from birth and could not walk or talk or do anything from childhood. Curled up like that for 16 years, had to be fed and clothed and everything.

And I said, hey, brother, sister, I don't have the faith to make this person get up and walk. I might as well be honest with you. And I said, I can pray that God will give you grace to look after this child, but I don't want to deceive you and make you feel that as soon as I pray, this girl is going to get up and walk, who has never walked for 16 years.

We must be honest and humble about the measure of gift we have and the measure of faith we have. And I also told them if Jesus himself were here, he would have made her walk immediately. What is the difference? Jesus had complete faith.

There was no sin in his life. You know, so much of our problem is that our mind and our heart is polluted by sin. There's so many things in us, which there could be selfishness, there could be pride, there could be an attachment to this material world, which Jesus was so completely detached.

He was one who walked on earth as one who was totally heavenly. And so his word had authority. So we need to humble ourselves and acknowledge that we cannot do all that he did.

But we can certainly live the way he taught us to live. There's no doubt about that, because that he gives us the provision for. In other words, we can follow him in his life, but not necessarily in his ministry.

We need to distinguish between these two. When Jesus said, follow me. And like when Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, 1, follow me as I follow Christ.

And in Philippians 3, 17, brethren, follow us and follow those who are at the same type of example as we have. There are examples today of people who are seeking to follow in Christ's footsteps. And when Jesus told us to follow him, he was not telling us to follow him in his ministry.

It's very, very important to understand that. But in his life, we're to walk as Jesus walked. But we cannot serve with the same gifts that he had.

He had all the gifts. But today the body of Christ is much larger in him. There was a complete body of Christ in one person.

But now the gifts are distributed. So none of you need feel condemned that when you pray for the sick, somebody's not healed. We can still walk as Jesus walked.

So when Jesus was telling us to follow him, he was telling us to follow him in his life. We need to distinguish between life and ministry. I mean, the clearest example of the fact that we cannot follow Jesus in his ministry is the fact that he died for the sins of the world.

Can we follow him in that ministry? Obviously not. Well, we can't follow him in any other ministry either. Not even in his healing all who are sick.

We might as well acknowledge that limitation and be honest. Because a lot of Christians are just being deceived by being told that we can do everything that Jesus did. In his life, yes, we can overcome sin as he did.

But not in his ministry. That's the honest truth and anyone who gives another impression is actually trying to deceive you. So I mentioned that in passing here.

And the other thing I want you to notice here is in Matthew 8, 17. It says, when Jesus healed all who were sick here in verse 16, something was fulfilled right there. If we don't read scripture exactly, we can misquote it.

And very often preachers misquote this verse 17 as I would just point out to you. Verse 17 says, the prophecy of Isaiah saying he himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases was fulfilled. Now many people apply that to the cross and say on the cross he took our infirmities and carried away our diseases and that it was fulfilled there.

But is that what scripture says? No. We must follow scripture exactly. The prophecy from Isaiah 53, even though a number of things in Isaiah 53 do relate to the cross.

It's very important to understand that. Perhaps we should turn back to Isaiah 53 and check. And I will just show you something so that we don't believe a false teaching.

If you don't understand the truth, you can get into bondage. But if you do understand the truth, it will set you free. See Isaiah 53 says, he grew up before him like a tender shoot.

Verse 2, that was not on the cross. That was in Nazareth. And he was despised and forsaken of men.

Verse 3, that was throughout his life. It was not on the cross. He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief throughout his life.

Men hid their face, he was despised and we did not esteem him. So all of Isaiah 53 is not relating to the cross. Some of it is relating to other aspects of his life.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, did not open his mouth. That was not on the cross. That was when he was being tried in court.

And many verses like that. The same way, this verse, he himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. Which is here in verse 17 of Matthew 8. Which is a quotation from Isaiah 53 verse 4. That was not fulfilled on the cross.

Like I said, everything in Isaiah 53 was not fulfilled on the cross. Some parts were fulfilled at other times in his life. And this is one of those verses that was fulfilled at another time.

There is no verse that says that Christ took our sicknesses with him on the cross. Even though that's a very popular belief, particularly in Pentecostal charismatic circles. But look through scripture and see if you can find it anywhere in the New Testament.

It's not there. It's amazing how many Christians believe things which are not written in scripture just because they've been brainwashed by some preacher. Let's read scripture exactly.

When does the New Testament say that this Old Testament verse, he himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases, when was that fulfilled? Years before Jesus went to Calvary. Here in Matthew 8, When he healed all that were sick, this scripture was fulfilled. Right there.

That he took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. And what is it referring to? It's not referring to his taking our sicknesses on the cross. It's referring to the fact that here were a whole lot of people who were sick.

And he took it away. He took away their sicknesses and their infirmities. He carried them away and they were all healed.

That is the fulfillment of this verse. So does that mean that we cannot pray for healing? Of course we can pray for healing. We can pray for anything that will help us to serve God better.

I myself pray for healing every time I'm sick. And I found many times God has healed me. So it doesn't mean that we will have perfect health.

It doesn't mean that when you're 70 years old you'll have the health of a 25 year old. Certainly not. But we can ask God for healing.

But the point is this. I cannot ask God to take away every single sickness in the same way that I can ask him to take away every single sin. It's very important to understand that.

Because there's so much confusion on that. Christ died for our sins. It's a very clear teaching in scripture.

And there is no verse that says Christ died for all our sicknesses. If there were such a verse, then we would have every right to ask the Lord to take away every single sickness. And by sickness I mean poor vision.

I wouldn't be wearing glasses then. Or loss of hair. That's another type of sickness.

None of us would be bald. We have to be honest and real. A lot of Christians don't love the truth.

And that's why God allows them to be deceived. I want you to know the truth in this area so that you don't get fooled. Now I'll tell you why this is important.

Supposing you were to tell a non-Christian, Christ can take away all your sins. And he can heal all your sicknesses. And you have scriptural support for the first statement, but no scriptural support for the second one.

But you've heard it popularly preached. So you preach that to the non-Christian. And this non-Christian who knows nothing about the Bible, believes you.

He says, OK, what should I do? You say, ask Christ to forgive you. Turn from your sin. Ask him to forgive you.

And he does that. Receive him as your savior. He does that.

And you tell him on the basis of God's word, your sins are blotted out. We confess our sins. He's faithful and just to forgive us all our sins.

And you assure him your sins are forgiven. And then you tell him, now Christ died also for your sicknesses. Well, he says, I've got some serious sicknesses in my body.

And he says, pray for it. I've got cancer, he says. I've got tuberculosis.

Pray for it. The same way, just like you prayed for sickness. And he says, Lord, take away my sicknesses.

I believe you. With the same faith that he had for Christ to take away his sins, he believes to take away his disease. And you've already told him that sin is a greater problem than sickness.

And if Jesus can take care of the bigger problem, he can sure take care of the smaller one. Now he goes away, believing you that his sins are forgiven. And you probably also told him to believe that his sicknesses are healed.

He goes to a doctor a week later, and the doctor says, your cancer is worse. What's he going to think about your gospel? He's going to say, this guy fooled me. He said that Christ would take away my sickness.

He hasn't. And so he says, perhaps he hasn't even taken away my sin. Because if he cannot take away the smaller problem like a sickness, how do I know he's taken away the bigger problem like my sin? You see how this type of preaching is bringing a lot of confusion and deceiving people.

And it's that type of deception I want to deliver you from. And you should spread that message to others. And that is, don't try to have faith for something scripture has not promised.

Look for a promise. And when you find a promise, see if that applies to you. Is it something Jesus did on the cross? This verse particularly.

Surely he himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. Where was it fulfilled? It was fulfilled when he was physically on earth healing some people. Like as I said, we can ask God for our needs.

My God shall supply all your need according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. This is a specific promise, Philippians 4.19. He doesn't say that he'll give me all that I want. We've got to read scripture carefully.

Philippians 4.19 says, my God will supply all your need. Now there are a lot of things which we think are our need and God doesn't think so. It's just like little children.

When little children come to their father and say, Dad, I need this. Dad will say, you don't need that, you want it. But I don't think you need it, so I'm not going to give it to you.

You know a good father does not give his children everything they ask for. Only a foolish father would give his children everything he asks for. Sometimes we give our children some painful things like an injection or surgery.

It's extremely painful, necessary for them. They don't want it, but they need it. That's how a good father is.

The child can't understand why in the world I should go through surgery or take this painful injection. But the dad says, you need it. So God is like that.

He's a loving father and we are children. We don't know sometimes what's good for us. God has promised to give us everything we need.

And where he sees that I need healing because it will further his purposes and is for my greater good, he will always heal me. But where he sees it's not that necessary, he may not. You know, I have discovered that God allows me to go through certain difficulties on earth so that I can understand the difficulties other people are going through.

If by prayer we can escape every problem, every difficulty, every sickness, every trial, it will be very difficult for us to have compassion on other people who have to go through those things. I remember some years ago when I was in the middle of a conference and speaking to young people and I had to change my train ticket and I had to go to the railway station to do that. This was going back more than 40 years ago.

And I prayed and I said, Lord, please make sure the queue there is short so that I don't have to waste a long time there. And when I went there, the queue was so long, it was going outside the station. I had to stand in the sun for quite a while before I reached the counter to change my ticket.

And I came back, I was young, I was just in my late 20s. And I said, Lord, why didn't you answer my prayer? And I got a word from the Lord at the time that really I've never forgotten. And that was, the Lord said, if I deliver you from all the problems that your fellow countrymen face, you will never be able to empathize with them.

You'll never be able to understand what they go through. There are many prayers that I will answer yours, but there are some things I will not answer because I want you to experience what others go through so that you don't find deliverance just by prayer. And how in the midst of that suffering or difficulty, you still

know how to trust me and thank me.

That was a lesson I've never forgotten. When I've traveled in crowded trains and faced other difficulties that we face here in India, I say, Lord, thank you. I can understand what other people are going through, and therefore I can sympathize with them.

So remember that if God doesn't heal your sickness or God doesn't solve some problem of yours, it's because he wants you to, some physical problem I mean, he wants you to understand what other people in your country go through so that you can have a more sympathetic way in which you can approach them in ministering to them. But when it comes to sin, the word of God is clear, absolutely clear. Every sin which you confess will be forgiven immediately, there's no delay in that.

When you pray for sickness, sometimes the Lord may take a little time to heal it, but when it comes to sin, past sin, the forgiveness is immediate. And when it comes to overcoming sin, Romans 6.14 is very clear, sin will not rule over you. And that we can claim.

So if we don't understand the distinction between that which God will do immediately and that which God may do slowly or that which God may not do, we can get confused in whether God answers prayer or not. I always say that God answers every prayer. But like the traffic lights that we see at traffic junctions, sometimes it's red, God says no.

It is an answer, but the answer is no. Sometimes it's orange or yellow, and then God is saying, wait, not yet, I'll give it to you, and sometimes it is green. Yes, you can have it right now.

So remember the traffic lights when you think of God answering prayer. Every prayer is answered. God's traffic lights are always working.

But don't think that when he says no, he didn't answer. He did answer. If my little son came and asked me for something and I said, no son, I can't give it to you, he can't say, dad didn't give me an answer.

Dad did give me an answer, but the answer was no. So remember this, that God answers every prayer. Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes the answer is wait, sometimes the answer is no.

But when it comes to sin, his answer is always yes. Always yes, because Christ came to the world to save us from sin. It's very important for me to emphasize this, the distinction between Christ, what he came for, and what he does.

He blesses us in many ways, but there are things that he's promised to do immediately, certain other things, which he does as a matter of his goodness. God is a good God. He makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

He makes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. There are many things that God does even for unbelievers. For example, Cornelius.

He was a total unconverted military man, and yet it says his prayers God heard. But when it comes to forgiveness of sins and being a child of God, there is absolutely no doubt in the teaching of Scripture. So I wanted to emphasize this so that we don't get into any confusion.

If you equate sickness with sin, like a lot of Christians seek to do, we'll find confusion in our mind when we find, why is this prayer not being answered? For example, pray for material things. A lot of people pray for

houses and lands and cars and all types of things. We can certainly ask for them.

I always say you can ask God for anything, anything under the sun, provided you conclude your prayer with, but Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt. If you can conclude your prayer with that sentence, not as I will, but as thou wilt, you can ask for anything. Because some things are not God's will.

What we think is good for us may not be good for us. Freedom from sin, forgiveness of sin is always good for us, 100% of the time, that He will always do. But a lot of other things which we think are good for us may not be the best for us.

This is the way to understand the truth of Scripture in a proper way. We'll continue in our study at the next session.

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