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Coming to Jesus for Cleansing; Matthew 8:1-4

GPBC

3.3.19

Introduction – I believe the key word that Matthew uses to transition from the Sermon on the Mount to the ten miracles recorded in chs 8-9 is authority. The ministry of Jesus was 3-fold (4:23). Jesus taught the Scriptures, He proclaimed the gospel, and He performed miracles. Right after Matthew gives that 3-fold description of Jesus' ministry, he records the great Sermon on Mount, which exemplifies the teaching aspect of Jesus' ministry. Remember how Matthew concludes the Sermon the Mount (7:29). The teaching of Jesus demonstrated His authority to everyone present. He taught as one who had authority. His teaching carried with it the undeniable impression of conveying absolute truth. Those listening to Him that day knew that he did not derive His authority from another source. It was inherent within Him. They could sense that ultimate, final authority resides in this man.

Matthew turns to the miracle-working aspect of Jesus' ministry in chs 8-9, and the word authority appears again and again. In other words, the miracles of Jesus demonstrate His authority over the natural realm. Both instances, His teaching and His miracles, point to Jesus as none other than God in the flesh. He teaches with authority and He acts with authority. His teaching rises above the teaching of men, and His miracles rise above the norms of the physical, natural realm. What greater way to introduce Jesus' authority over the physical, natural realm than to record the story of Jesus cleansing a leper!

- I. A Man in a Desperate Condition
 - a. V1 – there were many witnesses to this miracle
 - b. This was a man in a very desperate condition. Leprosy has almost been eradicated in our day, but you can still find lepers today. Leprosy is a horrible skin disease. It's first symptom is a numbness in one's fingers and toes. Then the skin of the digits and cartilage areas like the ears and nose become scaly because the blood flow has been cut off. The body begins to emit a foul odor as it begins to rot. Eventually parts of the nose and ears and fingers and toes begin to shrivel up and break off, making the facial features contort.

- c. It's a dreaded disease because it cuts one off from everyone else. No one wants to be around a leper.
- d. In Jesus' day leprosy was seen as a curse. It was incurable. A leper was considered ceremonially unclean and banned from corporate worship. Anyone who came in contact with a leper was also considered unclean and banned from worship. You were cut off from society, quarantined from worship, and left alone with little hope.
- e. This leper realized his only hope was Jesus!

II. A Prayer for His Desperate Condition

- a. Notice that he came to Jesus. He came to Jesus. He knew his situation was a desperate one. He knew he could not rectify his circumstance. He knew no one and nothing else could solve his issue. So he came to Jesus.
- b. And he came in the right manner. He didn't come with demands. He didn't approach Jesus as if he deserved something from Jesus or that Jesus owed him anything. He didn't imply that Jesus would be in the wrong not to grant him his wish. He didn't infer that he would reject Jesus if He refused to heal him. He came to Jesus and he worshipped. He knelt before Him. He came in humility. He came pleading. He came as a beggar in need of mercy.
- c. He came to Jesus with the right view of Jesus. He didn't call Jesus miracle-worker, although He is. He didn't call Jesus doctor, although He is the great physician. He called Jesus by His most appropriate designation. He called upon Jesus as Lord. You see this leper knew something about the authority of Jesus – that He had all authority. He wasn't just a teacher of truth; He was truth.
- d. He acknowledged the sovereign will of Jesus. "if you will" In other words, he was admitting he had no merit or claim or right to be healed. There was no language of "should" as if there was a moral obligation upon Jesus to heal him. There was no language of "have to" as if Jesus were under some kind of legal obligation. There was no plea to anything external. But if Jesus willed it. Not his will, but if Jesus willed it. If Jesus willed for him to be healed, then he would be healed.
- e. Lastly, he acknowledged the power of Jesus to be able to do what no one else and nothing else could do for him. Jesus was able to make

him clean. No doctor, no medicine, no balm, no witch doctor, no incantation, nothing, nothing could deliver him out of his desperate condition. But he knew Jesus could.

- f. Lesson on prayer – He knelt, he called upon the Lord, he was pleading for mercy, and he believed in the power of Jesus.

III. A Miraculous Cleansing

- a. Notice the method Jesus employed to heal this leper was drenched in mercy, compassion, and power!
- b. He stretched out His hand and touched him. He didn't have to touch him. Jesus can heal by just saying the word. But He stretched out to him and touched him. He had not felt a touch by anyone for as long as he could remember. No one wanted to touch him. They couldn't stand to see him. They couldn't stand to be near him. They couldn't stand to smell him. They dodged him. They created distance from him. They might catch his dreaded disease. They would be unclean. If they were to come into contact with him, it would disrupt their lives. They didn't dare touch him or even get near him.
- c. But Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him.
- d. And then He spoke to him. He not only had not felt the touch of another, he had not heard words of warmth from another. He may have heard jeers. He may have heard whispers. He may have heard warnings to stay away. He may have heard pity. But Jesus spoke to him.
- e. And oh what a difference it makes when Jesus speaks. God, in the flesh, possessing all authority. When God speaks, the impossible happens!
- f. And thrill of all thrills, oh hear what Jesus says, "I will." I will. Those two words sounded like drops of priceless jewels in the rotting ears of this leper. Everything in his world hung on what Jesus might say. And He said, "I will." That "I will" answered the leper's plea for mercy.
- g. And then He gave the word of command to the infectious, incurable condition of the leper – "be clean." Be clean. He hadn't been clean in ages! Bathing couldn't make him clean. Others couldn't make him clean. Rituals and ceremonies and medicines couldn't make him clean. He couldn't get clean.

- h. But one command from the lips of the omnipotent, sovereign, compassionate Savior could make him clean! “Be clean” answered the leper’s faith that Jesus was able to cleanse him.
 - i. Immediately, immediately – the dreaded, incurable, long-stifling disease was gone in an instant! When Jesus heals, the result is instantaneous, miraculous, unexplainable apart from God.
 - j. He came to Jesus in a desperate condition. He came in humble, faith. He came pleading the mercy and power of Jesus to deliver. And Jesus cleansed him!
- IV. An Intriguing Instruction
- a. Some propose that Jesus instructed the man to tell no one because this was early in Jesus’ ministry and He didn’t want to draw too much attention to Himself too early or those against Him would set in motion the events leading to His death before He completed His mission.
 - b. Some propose Jesus wanted to avoid becoming known as nothing more than a wonder-worker.
 - c. I don’t think either of those are the case. He controlled the events around Him, after all He is the one who has all authority. Word had already traveled that He could heal.
 - d. I think the purpose of this intriguing instruction was two-fold.
 - i. It was about the restoration of this man who had been labeled unclean and cut off for so long. He restored him physically, now he sends him to be restored socially.
 - ii. It was about providing undeniable proof to those who would later seek to kill Him that He was indeed the Son of God. He gave them sufficient reason and evidence to believe in Him instead of rejecting Him.
- V. A Lesson from a Leper
- a. Just like that leper, we are in a desperate condition. Some call it the human condition, the Bible calls it sin. Sin is so much like leprosy. It will cut us off from the people we love. It will cut us off from God. It eats away at us on the inside slowly but surely. It makes us numb to the truth. It causes our souls to rot. It grows and festers. It gets worse over time. It’s incurable. We can’t resolve it. Others can’t stop it.

Nothing and no one can cure us of this spiritual disease – but Jesus can.

- b. Just like that leper, if we come to Jesus believing that He is God and pleading to Him for His mercy and power to cleanse us from our desperate, dying condition – He will.
- c. He is willing and He is able! We find in Jesus mercy, compassion, and power to heal, cleanse, and save. Jesus will draw near. Jesus will touch our infirmity of sin. Jesus will speak words of life and forgiveness and salvation.
- d. Immediately, immediately – as soon as we believe and repent, Jesus will immediately remove our stain of sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness!
- e. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Conclusion – Come to Jesus for cleansing!