

Brandon Phillips / General Adult

The King and His Glory / Healing; Faith; Mercy; Grace / Matthew 8:1-4

In Matthew 8:1-4, Matthew presents the healing of a leper as compelling evidence that Jesus is our compassionate and sovereign Messiah. This encounter reveals four ways desperate and unclean sinners can rightly approach Jesus for grace, mercy, and healing.

Pre-sermon Comments

Section Proposition and Outline

In [Matthew 8:1-17](#), following Jesus' authoritative teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew presents three miraculous healings as undeniable demonstrations of Jesus' divine authority and messianic identity, confirming that He is the promised Son of God.

- **Jesus's Powerful and Personal Touch: He Cleanses the Leper (8:1-4) [Today's Sermon]**
- **Jesus's Sovereign and Saving Word: He Heals the Gentile's Servant (8:5-13) [Next Week]**
- **Jesus's Compassionate and Conquering Ministry: He Restores the Suffering (8:14-17) [Two Weeks]**

Sermon Text

Matthew 8:1-4 LSB

¹ Now when Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. ² And behold, a leper came to Him and was bowing down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." ³ And Jesus stretched out His

hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Matthew Review

Matthew 1:1 LSB

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Matthew 1:17 LSB

¹⁷ Therefore all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, fourteen generations.

Matthew 1:23–24 LSB

²³ “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” ²⁴ And Joseph got up from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife,

Matthew 3:16–17 LSB

¹⁶ And after being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove *and* coming upon Him,

Matthew 3:16–17 LSB

¹⁷ and behold, *there was* a voice out of the heavens saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

Matthew 4:1 LSB

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Genesis 3:15 LSB

¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Matthew 7:28–29 LSB

²⁸ Now it happened that when Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were astonished at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

The Context of our Passage

How Are These Miracles Related?

Each miracle dealt with basic physical needs.

2 Corinthians 1:3 LSB

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

People Appealed Directly to Jesus

Matthew 8:2 LSB

² And behold, a leper came to Him and was bowing down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

Matthew 8:6 LSB

⁶ and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented.”

Matthew 8:14 LSB

¹⁴ When Jesus came into Peter’s home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever.

Luke 4:38 LSB

³⁸ Then He stood up and *left* the synagogue, and entered Simon’s home. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her.

Jesus Acted According to His Authority and Will

Matthew 8:3 LSB

³ And Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matthew 8:13 LSB

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

Matthew 8:15 LSB

¹⁵ And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and *began* waiting on Him.

Jesus Ministered to the Lowly

Matthew 11:28–29 LSB

²⁸ “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

The Religious Leaders’ Rejection

Matthew 9:34 LSB

³⁴ But the Pharisees were saying, “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

Matthew, vols. 1-4: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8:1–15

Jesus’ miracles were the supreme proof of His divinity and the irrefutable credentials of His messiahship. Matthew’s purpose in recording the miracles, like Jesus’ purpose in performing them, was to confirm His deity and His claim to be the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

Matthew 12:24 LSB

²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, “This man does not cast out demons except by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.”

Matthew 13:11–13 LSB

¹¹ And Jesus answered and said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² “For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³ “Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Matthew 11:20 LSB

20 Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.

Matthew 11:25 LSB

At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

The Crowd’s Interest

The Crowd’s Motive

John 6:66 LSB

66 As a result of this many of His disciples went away and were not walking with Him anymore.

John 20:29–31 LSB

²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are* those who did not see, and yet believed.” ³⁰ Therefore many other signs Jesus also did in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Connection with [Matthew 4](#)

Matthew 4:23–25 LSB

²³ And Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and

every kind of sickness among the people. ²⁴ And the news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵ And large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and *from* beyond the Jordan.

Matthew 5:1-2 LSB

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ² And He opened His mouth and *began to* teach them, saying,

Matthew 7:28-29 LSB

²⁸ Now it happened that when Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were astonished at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

[Matthew 8-9 in Context](#)

Matthew 8:1 LSB

¹ Now when Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him.

Discussion Questions

Read [Matthew 8:1-4](#). What stands out to you about the way the leper approaches Jesus?

How does Jesus respond to the leper's request, both in word and action?

Why do you think Matthew emphasizes that Jesus *touched* the leper, when He could have healed him with just a word?

Pastor Brandon said this miracle demonstrates Jesus's **divine authority** and **messianic identity**. How does this healing confirm those truths?

What does this encounter teach us about Jesus's compassion for the **lowly and outcast**?

Why is it significant that Jesus says, “*I am willing; be cleansed,*” instead of just performing the miracle silently?

Pastor Brandon mentioned that Jesus acts according to **His authority and will**. How does this shape our understanding of prayer and God's answers to our requests?

The leper came to Jesus humbly, acknowledging His authority (“*if You are willing...*”). How does this model how we should approach God in prayer?

In what ways can we reflect Jesus’s **powerful and personal touch** to people who are “unclean” or outcast in today’s society?

How can this passage encourage us to trust in **God’s will** even when His answer to our prayers is not immediate or what we expected?

Pastor Brandon highlighted that Jesus ministered to people unnoticed by the religious leaders. Who might God be calling you to reach out to that others overlook?

Sermon Proposition and Outline

In [Matthew 8:2-4](#), Matthew presents the healing of a leper as compelling evidence that Jesus is our compassionate and sovereign Messiah. This encounter reveals four ways desperate and unclean sinners can rightly approach Jesus for grace, mercy, and healing.

- **You Must Come With Bold Confidence**
- **You Must Come With Reverent Worship**
- **You Must Come With Humble Submission**
- **You Must Come With Expectant Faith**

You Must Come With Bold Confidence

Matthew 8:2 LSB

² And behold, a leper came to Him and was bowing down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

What is Leprosy?

Leviticus 13:1–2 LSB

¹ Then Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ² “When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.

Leviticus 13:3 LSB

³ “Then the priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of leprosy; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him unclean.

Leviticus 13:4 LSB

⁴ “But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair on it has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate *him who has* the infection for seven days.

Leviticus 13:5 LSB

⁵ “Then the priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the infection has not changed *and* the infection has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days.

Leviticus 13:6 LSB

⁶ “And the priest shall look at him again on the seventh day, and if the infection has faded and the mark has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is *only* a scab. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean.

Modern Day Application

The serious consequences of biblical leprosy

Spiritual Defilement

Numbers 5:2-3 LSB

² “Command the sons of Israel that they send away from the camp every leper and everyone having a discharge and everyone who is unclean because of a *dead* person. ³ “You shall send away both male and female; you shall send them outside the camp so that they will not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst.”

Physical Suffering

The disease...generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in such spots loses its original color. It gets to be thick, glossy, and scaly.... As the sickness progresses, the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch, with deep furrows between the swellings, so that the face of the afflicted individual begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off or are absorbed; toes are affected similarly. Eyebrows and eyelashes drop out. By this time one can see the person in this pitiable condition is a leper. By a touch of the finger one can also feel it. One can even smell it, for the leper emits a very unpleasant odor. [The bacteria] frequently attacks the larynx; [therefore], the leper's voice...becomes hoarse, and you can now not only see, feel, and smell the leper, but you can hear his rasping voice. And if you stay with him for some time, you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your mouth, probably due to the odor. ~ L. S. Huizenga

Matthew 8:2 LSB

² And behold, a leper came to Him and was bowing down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

James 1:6 LSB

⁶ But he must ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

Discussion Questions

Pastor Brandon spent significant time explaining the Old Testament laws regarding leprosy ([Leviticus 13](#)). What stood out to you about the seriousness with which God treated leprosy among the Israelites?

How did leprosy result in both **physical suffering** and **spiritual defilement**? Why was separation from the camp necessary, and how did this reflect God's holiness?

Pastor Brandon mentioned that lepers were considered “untouchable” and were even isolated from other outcasts like tax collectors and prostitutes. How does this help us grasp the desperation of the leper in [Matthew 8:2](#)?

How does understanding the social and spiritual isolation of lepers deepen your appreciation for the boldness of this man approaching Jesus?

Read [Matthew 8:2](#) again: *“And behold, a leper came to Him and was bowing down before Him, and said, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’”* How do you see **bold confidence** displayed in this leper’s actions and words?

Pastor Brandon emphasized that this man knew Jesus had the power to heal but humbly submitted to His will. How can we learn from this balance of **boldness and humility** in our own prayers and approach to Jesus?

In what ways do we often struggle with coming to Jesus boldly—especially when we’re aware of our own “uncleanness” (sin, shame, guilt)?

Pastor Brandon drew a parallel between biblical leprosy and modern health crises like COVID-19, critiquing how isolation was handled. What did you think about his comparison between [Leviticus 13's model of isolation](#) and modern quarantine practices?

Pastor Brandon's proposition was that Matthew presents this healing as compelling evidence that Jesus is our **compassionate and sovereign Messiah**. How does this encounter prove both His compassion and His sovereignty?

Why is it important that Jesus did not merely **speak healing** from a distance but personally **touched** the leper (v.3, though not yet read in the excerpt)? What does this reveal about His heart toward sinners?

How does this challenge any wrong assumptions we might have about needing to "clean ourselves up" before coming to Jesus?

Which of the four ways Pastor Brandon mentioned (Bold Confidence, Reverent Worship, Humble Submission, Expectant Faith) do you personally find the most challenging when approaching Jesus? Why?

How might meditating on this passage encourage you to approach Jesus differently in your daily walk, prayer life, or when dealing with personal sin?

Is there someone in your life who feels like an "untouchable" right now—someone isolated by sin, shame, or suffering? How can you reflect Christ's compassion to them this week?

You Must Come With Reverent Worship

Matthew 8:2 LSB

² And behold, a leper came to Him and was bowing down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

Matthew 2:2 LSB

² "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

Matthew 4:9–10 LSB

⁹ and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

John 4:20–24 LSB

²⁰ “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” ²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴ “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Acts 7:43 LSB

⁴³ ‘YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.’

Revelation 4:10 LSB

¹⁰ the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Revelation 19:10 LSB

¹⁰ Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do that! I am a fellow slave with you and your brothers who have the witness of Jesus. Worship God! For the witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

John MacArthur points out -

It is both interesting and instructive to note that the scribes and Pharisees who were doubtlessly in the multitude that day were beautifully and richly attired, yet were inwardly corrupt, proud, and unbelieving. By contrast, the leper appeared loathsome and repulsive on the outside, but inwardly he was reverent and believing. ~ John MacArthur

You Must Come With Humble Submission

Matthew 8:2 LSB

² And behold, a leper came to Him and was bowing down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

Romans 8:28 LSB

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Matthew 6:10 LSB

¹⁰ ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

You Must Come With Expectant Faith

Matthew 8:2 LSB

² And behold, a leper came to Him and was bowing down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

Matthew 8:3 LSB

³ And Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Luke 7:20 LSB

²⁰ When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, ‘Are You the One who is to come, or should we look for someone else?’”

Luke 7:22–23 LSB

²² And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: *the* BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, and *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised up, *the* POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. ²³ “Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

Discussion Questions

How does the leper’s posture and address (“Lord, if You are willing”) reflect a heart of worship?

— Why is it significant that Matthew uses the same word for “worship” that appears in passages like [Matthew 2:2](#) and [Revelation 4:10](#)?

In what ways do we, like the Pharisees, sometimes focus on outward appearances while neglecting the inward life of worship?

— How can we guard against this tendency in our personal walk with Christ?

Pastor Brandon said, “Beloved, the Lord doesn’t care what you look like on the outside.”

— How does this truth bring comfort and challenge to you personally?

The leper acknowledged Jesus’s power but deferred to His will. How does this model the right attitude in our prayers, especially when asking for healing or relief from suffering?

Pastor Brandon warned against “hiding your sin.”

— How does humble submission to Christ help us deal with hidden sin?

— Why is humility essential when approaching Jesus with our struggles?

Romans 8:28 was cited as a reminder that “all things work together for good.”

— How can this verse encourage believers to submit to God’s will even when healing or deliverance doesn’t come?

Pastor Brandon emphasized that the leper declared, “You have the power to make me clean!”

— How is this statement an example of expectant faith without presumption?

— What’s the difference between believing God *can* and presuming He *must*?

Jesus responded by touching the leper, even though He could have healed from a distance.

— What does this teach us about Christ’s compassion?

— How does this shape the way we should view His involvement in our own suffering?

In Luke 7, even John the Baptist wrestled with doubt.

— How can we encourage one another when we face seasons of doubt about Christ’s power or plan?

Which of the leper's attitudes—reverent worship, humble submission, or expectant faith—do you find most challenging to live out? Why?

The Gospel

God

Created and owns everything

[*Gen 1:1*](#)—*In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*

[*Psalms 24:1*](#)—*The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.*

Is Perfectly Holy

[*1 John 1:5*](#)—*This is the message we heard from Him and announce to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

[*Matt 5:48*](#)—*Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Requires perfect obedience to His Law

[*James 2:10*](#)—*for whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*

Man

Has broken God's law

[*Rom 3:10,23*](#)—*there is none righteous, not even one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

Will pay the eternal penalty for his sin

[*Rom. 6:23*](#)—*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*

Cannot save himself by his good works

[Titus 3:5](#)—He saved us not based on works which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

Christ

Came to earth both as God and sinless man

[Col 2:9](#)—For in Him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form

Demonstrated God's love by dying on the cross to pay sin's penalty

[Rom 5:8](#)—But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us

[2 Cor 5:21](#)—He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Rose from the grave and is alive today

[1 Cor 15:4](#)—And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

Sinners

Must repent of all that dishonors God

[Isa 55:7](#)—Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

[Luke 9:23](#)—if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Must believe in Christ as Lord and Savior

[Rom 10:9](#)—that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Will you repent and believe in Christ?

[Acts 17:30](#)—therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.

Don't hesitate to contact Pastor Brandon or Pastor Keith if you have any questions about this sermon or if you would like to know how to follow Christ.

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Additional Quotes

Ordinarily, when something clean touches something unclean, it becomes unclean as well. But here, for the first time in history, things ran in the other direction, as the cleanliness of Jesus healed the unclean leper. ~ Philip Graham Ryken

The law could only diagnose his disease, but could not heal it. Jesus Christ could do what the law could not do, and the poor leper soon proved it. What a blessed thing it is for us that the Lord Jesus Christ has come to cleanse us from the leprosy of sin. ~ Charles Spurgeon

He that healed the leper is still almighty. Let us never despair of anyone's salvation. Let us pray on, and speak on, and work on, in the full assurance that nothing is too hard for the Lord. ~ J.C. Ryle

The leper's approach to Jesus—marked by reverence, humility, and faith—is a model for every sinner who seeks divine mercy. He did not demand healing, but simply submitted to the Lord's will, acknowledging Christ's sovereign power. ~ John MacArthur

Christ's power was put forth in cleansing the leper; His pity was shown in touching him. His power was manifest in that He could cleanse him with a word; His pity in that He would. ~ Matthew Henry

In touching the leper, Jesus was not defiled; rather, the leper was cleansed. Here we see a beautiful picture of the incarnation—where the Holy One takes on human flesh and touches the unclean to make them clean. ~ R.C. Sproul

The leper's words are a prayer of faith: 'If You will, You can.' Faith confesses God's omnipotence, but submits to His will. ~ Augustine of Hippo

The command to show himself to the priest underscores that Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. His miracles validated His messianic identity and upheld the Law's witness. ~ D.A. Carson

The touch of Christ is the healing of the soul. Where sin has made us untouchable, grace makes us whole. ~ A.W. Tozer