



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 8:1-17

Topic

Jesus heals multitudes, including Peter's mother-in-law of her fever after returning from the synagogue on the Sabbath

Title

"Saturday Night Fever"

Introduction

You've probably been involved in an unofficial caption contest. Someone you follow on social media posts a picture and asks you to suggest a caption for it.

Guns & Ammo magazine has a weekly caption contest. A recent photo showed a house cat sighting a rifle while lying on the ground. Next to the barrel were several dead rabbits.

The winning caption: "Let's see now. If I'm reading the wind right, I just need to hold it a **hare** to the left."

Our verses in Matthew present a series of snapshots of healings Jesus performed. Looking at them we might ask, as a caption contest, "What was Jesus thinking?" when He was being used by God the Father to heal.

Isaiah wins the caption contest. His Old Testament prophecy is quoted in verse seventeen where we read,

Mat 8:17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND BORE OUR SICKNESSES."

Every person Jesus healed, every time, you could say of Him, "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."

Of course, Jesus didn't actually assume the infirmities and sicknesses He healed. When He healed Peter's mother-in-law of her fever, He didn't become feverish.

Isaiah was talking about the Cross. It was there that He would bear our sin. Because sin is the root cause of all infirmities and sicknesses, it can be said that He bore those, too, while on the Cross.

I think it is therefore accurate to suggest that Jesus anticipated going to the Cross every time He healed someone.

The Cross was no easy mission; we recall Jesus sweating as it were great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane under the stress of the Cross.

Realizing the stress our Lord was anticipating ought to give us cause to appreciate every healing in a fresh, new light.

I'll therefore organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Anticipated Going To The Cross For You With Each Healing, and #2 You Appreciate Jesus Going To The Cross For You With Each Healing.

#1 Jesus Anticipated Going To The Cross For You With Each Healing

(v17)

Matthew's Gospel is arranged topically, not chronologically. Scholars point out that he is a competent editor of material in that his accounts of Jesus' miracles are about 50% shorter than the same accounts in the Gospel of Mark.

In these next two chapters he will present nine miracles in three groupings of three. In between the groups of three miracles he will insert sections on discipleship.

I want to start talking about this first group of three miracles of healing by looking at Isaiah's caption in verse seventeen.

Mat 8:17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND BORE OUR SICKNESSES."

The words are a portion of Isaiah 53:4 which are a portion of the famous chapter which describes to Israel her Messiah as God's Suffering Servant. Scholars suggest that Matthew was reminding his readers of that entire chapter by using these few words. It was his way of saying, "You see Jesus healing? Go back and read Isaiah and you'll see that He is the Suffering Servant prophesied so many years ago."

The New Testament several times says that the Suffering Servant of Isaiah fifty-three is none other than Jesus Christ.

Let me briefly summarize how Jesus was presented in Isaiah over 700 years before He was born:

- He would be counted as nothing because of His lowly background, rejected because of His message, and acquainted with grief because of His earthly mission (53:1-3).
- While Jesus was bearing the wrath of God for the sins of every human being, many onlookers would assume He was dying for His own crimes (53:4-6).
- Though sinless, Jesus would make no effort to defend Himself as He was led to die as our Substitute (53:7-8).
- Having paid in full the penalty for our sins, God would raise Him from the dead and show Him that His mission had been accomplished (53:11-12).

Jesus defeated sin on the Cross through His death and subsequent resurrection. He also defeated every result of sin, e.g., infirmities and sicknesses.

There is a sense in which all infirmities and sicknesses, and all suffering of any kind, are the result of sin. There would be no such things if Adam and Eve had not sinned.

Allow me to very briefly address a false teaching that arises from Isaiah fifty-three. There are those who maintain that physical healing is guaranteed us now because of what Jesus did on the Cross. You might call it 'healing on demand.'

If that were true, ***no one would ever die.***

There is no healing on demand in these verses. Jesus went to the Cross, defeated sin, so that all men everywhere can be saved. His work was finished, but its results have not been completed. The whole of creation still groans waiting for the final redemption that Jesus has accomplished.

At His Second Coming, in the Millennial Kingdom on earth, Jesus will eradicate sicknesses and infirmities. Then, in eternity, we who are saved will finally be in our glorified resurrection bodies, and the universe will be made new, and there will be no more sin, sickness, or suffering.

We believe God *can* and *does* heal, and we pray for healings. But in this current church age infirmities and sicknesses have not been totally eradicated.

The folks healed in these verses are healed in the light of the Cross. Their physical healings represent the spiritual healing available by grace through faith at the Cross.

Every single healing depended upon Jesus suffering and dying on the Cross. He could not help but anticipate what was shortly coming.

Maybe it's just me, but that puts healing in a whole new light. Or at least it reminds me that Jesus' life and ministry was always about the Cross upon which He would die for me.

Think of it this way. When Jesus told His disciples - which includes you and I - to take up their crosses daily, it was something He had done every day of His life. Every day Jesus lived, He lived in the shadow of the Cross.

#2 You Appreciate Jesus Going To The Cross For You With Each Healing

(v1-16)

Not sure what the disciples and the multitudes following Jesus thought would happen after He delivered the Sermon on the Mount but I think it's safe to say it wasn't that Jesus would be approached by a leper.

Mat 8:1 When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.

Mat 8:2 And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

Mat 8:3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Leprosy, in the Bible, is a generic term applied to a variety of skin disorders from psoriasis to true leprosy. Its symptoms ranged from white patches on the skin to running sores to the loss of digits on the fingers and toes. For the Hebrews it was a dreaded disease not only for its physical effects but because it rendered its victims ceremonially unclean. A leper was unfit to worship God (Leviticus 13:3). Anyone who came in contact with a leper was also considered unclean. Lepers were therefore isolated from the rest of the community.

The leper was violating the Law by approaching Jesus. Or was he?

He was violating the letter of the ceremonial Law but appealing to a higher spiritual Law - the Law of Love.

Jesus would respond in kind. When He touched the leper, He, too, was violating the ceremonial Law, but keeping the higher Law of Love.

The leper did not doubt the ability of Jesus to heal him. He simply asked if Jesus was willing. We would say he prayed submitted to the will of God.

Leprosy, by the way, is understood to be a symbol in the Bible for sin. We see that Jesus is more than able to cure sin; He is willing.

1Ti 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

1Ti 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I ran across something totally fascinating. Remember we are in an Isaiah fifty-three context. A portion of Isaiah 53:4 that Matthew did not directly quote reads, "Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." In the Latin Vulgate version of the Old Testament those words are translated, "we thought Him to be **a leper.**"

That's how the Jews read that verse. So here comes Jesus, touching a leper which the Jews were forbidden to do because it would render you ceremonially unclean and, perhaps, you would contract their leprosy. Before the kingdom ever got off the ground, it looked like the King was going to be a leper. But instead of contracting leprosy Jesus healed him.

Somebody in the multitudes following The Lord must have shouted out, "That's our Messiah!"

Mat 8:4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

The main reason Jesus gave this counsel was to provide a "testimony" to Israel's priests. There had only been two recorded cases in the Jewish Scriptures of people being healed of leprosy - Miriam and Naaman. Both of those were miraculous. It would have put the priests on official notice that Jesus was the Messiah.

By the way, it is instructive that God healed the leprosy of a Jew - Miriam - and a Gentile - Naaman. It anticipates the salvation of Jews and Gentiles alike.

We would also note that Jesus was not afraid to have His healings validated independently. Too much of what passes for miracles today is not miraculous at all.

Mat 8:5 Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him,

Mat 8:6 saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."

Mat 8:7 And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

Centurions were Roman soldiers who commanded up to one hundred men. They are always mentioned in a good light in the Bible.

The better translation of verse seven makes it a question. Jesus was asking the centurion, "What do you want me to do?"

Mat 8:8 The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.

Mat 8:9 For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

This shines a spotlight on authority. We obey authority because we realize there is something or someone behind it with the power to enforce it. The centurion had a sense that all authority was delegated by God - even that of Jesus in His earthly ministry. Since what he desired was spiritual and supernatural it did not depend on anything physical or natural.

He understood that Jesus could heal with or without a touch because ultimately it was not about method or technique but authority.

It's a lesson to us to keep things in a spiritual mindset; to not be enamored of methods and techniques but to remain dependent upon God.

Mat 8:10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!

Mat 8:11 And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 8:12 But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

You need to put on your Jewish way-of-thinking cap for just a moment. Gentiles, like this centurion, were considered just as unclean as lepers. The best a Gentile could hope for, the most generous idea a Jew might entertain, was that they would be servants and slaves to Israel in the kingdom of God.

Jesus said that Gentiles would be just as welcome as the patriarchs. It's a "guess who's coming to dinner" moment.

At the same time, many Israelites would perish in torment in Hell. They thought themselves "sons of the kingdom" by birth, but natural birth is not enough to save you. You must be born spiritually, born-again - and that is available to whosoever will believe on Jesus Christ.

Jesus didn't directly violate any Law but He did indicate those who had never been under the Law could and would be saved without ever having to keep it. Each snapshot in this chapter challenged the status quo by elevating their thinking to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

Think of it this way. The religion of the Pharisees and Scribes was all about showing how exclusive they were. Jesus was including lepers and Gentiles in His kingdom.

Mat 8:14 Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever.

Mat 8:15 So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.

In the Gospel of Mark we are told that this healing occurred after Jesus had come from the synagogue on the Sabbath. It seems that Jesus healed her before sunset - again violating the letter of the Law but keeping its spirit.

We have to note, in passing, that Peter was married. He did not have the gift of celibacy, nor take a vow of celibacy. Thus he does not qualify to be the first Pope as some have labelled him.

Jesus wasn't through. Once the sun set, there was a long line of people outside the house who needed ministry.

Mat 8:16 When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,

Some sicknesses and infirmities are attributed to demons and to demonic possession. Not all; but some.

The question always comes up, "Why don't we see more demon possession today?"

Well first let me say **I'm OK with that!** I'm in no hurry to confront demons; are you?

Second, do we not see an absolute explosion of occult activity in the modern age? It's everywhere. I think an argument could be made that there is far **more** demonic activity on earth today than ever before. It may be more subtle, less sinister looking; but that only makes it all the more dangerous.

Let me give you an example. One of the most prominent and influential psychologists of the twentieth century was Carl Jung.

His whole process, Jungian therapy, is to contact spirit entities. He began going to seances. His whole family was involved in all of that, and that became part of this therapy.

Jung practiced something he called "active imagination." Listen to how it is described.

Jung [held] conversations with [a spirit named] Elijah who eventually changes into another figure, Philemon. Philemon teaches Jung about the nature of human consciousness. Jung begins to see how autonomous inner figures can act. It is the inner figure that seems to hold this knowledge, not Jung. Again, Jung's inner figure changes. This time it alters to take on the form of the Egyptian notion of spirit, Ka.

Let me give you another example. UFO activity is exploding exponentially. As we've told you over the years in our series of Prophecy Updates, almost all the unexplained UFO phenomena is demonic activity.

Just because people's heads aren't spinning all around and they aren't vomiting pea soup doesn't mean we're not seeing demonic activity. It is, quite literally, everywhere we look.

Why this set of miracles? A competent Bible scholar, Arno Gaebelein, saw something of a typology. It goes like this:

1. The healing of the leper represents the healing God was offering Israel at the first coming of Jesus. Leprosy is mentioned in the Old Testament as a curse for Israel breaking their covenant with God, so the healing of a leper showed God's intent to heal them spiritually and establish the kingdom.

2. Sadly, Israel rejected their Messiah. God then set aside Israel, temporarily, to call out for Himself a people from the Gentiles. It's the church age in which we live and is represented by the healing of the centurion's servant.
3. Jesus entered a Jewish house and healed its inhabitant. That's a representation of His Second Coming when He will again come to the house of Israel to heal them.
4. Finally, in the Millennial Kingdom on earth, Jesus will heal all manner of sicknesses and infirmities, represented by His long night of healing in these verses.

Things like this are only our speculation, but it fits the facts. Whether Matthew intended this progression or not, it is what has happened and what is going to yet happen.

Let me suggest a thought for your meditation. The healings in these verses, and most if not all Jesus' healings, were to restore a persons broken fellowship with God.

1. The leper was an outcast, unable to approach God or men.
2. The centurion was outside the nation of Israel.
3. Peter's mother-in-law was unable to attend synagogue. More than that, women in general were not thought well of.

When asking God to heal we should keep in mind the greater context - that of fellowship with The Lord. It's why, when confronted by the paralyzed man who was let down through the roof, Jesus' first comments to him were, "your sins are forgiven."

At the Cross Jesus heals spiritually and, as a result of His victory over sin, He still may heal physically.

I want to return to something in the healing of the centurion's servant. We read in verse ten that Jesus "marveled" at the centurion's faith. I think sometimes we go around as believers thinking that we are always disappointing The Lord. While that may be true, you can just as easily cause Him to marvel, to be astonished.

Step-out in faith. Stepping out in faith could mean you must do the thing The Lord has been prompting you to do by His indwelling Holy Spirit.

Or it could be a matter of simple obedience to His Word - of being revived to more fully keep His statutes and walk in an empowered obedience.

It could be a lot of things, but my point is this: May it be said of you - of us - that Jesus "marveled."