

Power to Heal, Compassion to Serve (Matthew 8:1-17)

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[0 : 00] So we're reading Matthew chapter 8 verse 1 to 17. When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him asking for help.

Lord, he said, my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly. Jesus said to him, shall I come and heal him? The centurion replied, Lord, I do not deserve to have you under my roof, but just say that word and my servant will be healed.

For I myself am a man under authority with soldiers under me. I tell this one, go, and he goes, and that one come, and he comes. I say to my servant, do this, and he does it.

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnawing of teeth. Then Jesus said to the centurion, go, let it be done just as you believed it would.

[1 : 53] And a servant was healed at that moment. When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her.

And she got up and began to wait on him. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him. And he drove out the spirits with the word, and healed all the sick.

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases. Thanks so much, Josh.

Good afternoon, everyone. Before we get into God's word, let me put my Bible down. It's what a powerful passage.

So let's lean on God's wisdom, and let's pray to him now as we ask him to teach us. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you.

[3 : 03] We thank you for the freedom to hear from your word. Lord, we thank you for how beautifully Josh read it for us, to remind us that your son Jesus is worth following.

He's not just any ordinary man. Not just a prophet. Not just a prophet. Not just a good teacher. But he has power to heal and compassion to do it. So Father, would you speak to us now as we hear from your word.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. We're starting a new series, but for those of you who have just joined us for the first time, we have actually been in Matthew before.

So if you're interested, feel free to jump on Spotify. You can listen to our previous messages through the book of Matthew. So they're in two different series, but if you just Google it or just search, you'll find it and you'll be able to catch up.

Let me share this with you. I think here's a statement I think is true. A good way to understand a person better is to find out a bit about their early years. One way to understand a person better is to find out about what they were like when they were younger.

[4 : 13] For example, before Simone Biles was a world-famous Olympic gymnast, she was actually a school-age prodigy, sweeping up all the medals at her age group.

Before the Bieber was a world-famous pop star, he was actually putting his own recordings on YouTube, right? And he was actually singing worship songs in his bedroom.

And before Jacinda was a world-famous prime minister, she was actually practicing her leadership skills as a 13-year-old student council president at Moransville Intermediate.

I don't know how you feel about your younger self. You may be a little bit embarrassed when you imagine what kinds of childhood photos might show up on the screen next, or early social media posts that maybe you feel like, oh, that, oh, okay, that didn't age well.

But whatever you feel about it, while our younger selves, they don't define who we are, do they, right? Because we do change. And yet our younger selves can and often do reveal a lot about us, maybe our personality, what we've always liked since we were kids.

[5 : 20] And maybe what's in our hearts. You know, what do we chase? What do we long for? Seeing our early days can often help us to go deeper into discovering who we really are, can't it?

And I think in the same way, if we dive into the early days of Jesus, his life and his ministry, that can help us to discover who he is, who he really is, right?

It can help us to go deeper into discovering who Jesus really is. I mean, is he a curse word? Is Jesus just an excuse to throw hate on someone else? Is Jesus just a name that you call out to so that you can get into heaven and that's it?

Or is there something more to who Jesus is? Because long before Jesus of Nazareth became the most significant world figure in history, right, I'm glad he beat Napoleon, and that's Napoleon of France, you know, not other Napoleons.

And long before he was regarded as the most influential person in the world, that Jesus, Jesus, Matthew tells us, was a man who preached, who healed, who loved, and who confronted others with a power and kindness like no one else.

[6 : 34] Okay? So as we walk through Matthew chapters 8 to 12, this coming term, in this series, it's kind of like getting a backstage pass to meet almost famous Jesus, right?

Jesus before all the stuff gets put on him. And to meet him through the experiences of those who were closest to him, his earliest followers, the first people his life, he changed the lives of.

And we meet Jesus here in Matthew's gospel at a point when crowds start to follow him, lives start to be transformed, and opposition begins to grow. This is the real Jesus.

And Matthew invites us to go deeper into following him. I know it's been over half a year, right, since we've heard from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We covered that last year as PCBC English.

So perhaps a quick refresh might help us as we try and get our bearings back into Matthew.

Matthew's gospel, actually, so gospel just means good news, according to Matthew.

[7 : 32] And Matthew's gospel is 28 chapters. So it's fairly long. It's the longest of all four gospels. And some people struggle, right? How do I finish reading through all this thing? One way to help us to realize that over 28 chapters, Matthew cycles between records of Jesus speaking, right, his speeches, and then his actions.

His speaking and his actions, or discourse, or then stories about him, right? And if we think of it that way, that can help us to get our bearings, right?

He goes from talking to traveling and doing stuff. Matthew walks us through, I think, step by step, right? He just switches between the two as we go through the gospel. He does this to show us who Jesus is and how he fulfills the hopes of God's people.

But the Jesus in Matthew, I think, looks different to what we expect. Jesus is not the guy that we see on protest signs. All right, when we read Matthew's Jesus, he's not the Jesus that we see on Christmas cards or on memes.

Matthew gives us real deal Jesus. And I think that's great. I'll put a diagram just to show you what I mean in terms of the story and speech kind of flip.

[8 : 44] So remember in chapters one to four, we heard a lot about the early stories of Jesus, right? His birth, right? His introduction to us as God's promised king. And then when we get to the end of that section, he starts to begin his public ministry.

Chapter four of Matthew says this, verse 17, it says this, repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. And then he goes out and he teaches, he preaches, he heals. And then what happens is that after we go to chapters one to four, it switches from story or narrative, right?

To the speech discourse. So we go from story to speech and we go from Jesus doing stuff to then Jesus giving the Sermon on the Mount, right?

Verse chapters five to seven. And Jesus, as we heard, he preached the most magnificent sermon in all of history. The Sermon on the Mount, his words there had the authority and not just any regular teacher.

It was something out of this world. It was giving us what it looked like to live in an upside down world as followers of Jesus. And when people heard it, when people heard it, Matthew chapter seven, verse 28 says, the crowds were amazed at his teaching.

[9 : 58] They were amazed because he taught them as one who had authority and not as their teachers of the law, right? That word authority is gonna come up over and over again in our series.

He has authority to say, you need to hear these words of mine and you need to put it into practice. He says that at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. He has authority to say audacious things like, seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, nothing else.

You cannot serve both God and money. You are the light of the world. Don't hide your light under a basket. Jesus has, he's got the gall, he's got the authority to say things like that to his followers and demand, expect that his followers will follow through.

But it's one thing, right, to speak words of authority. I'm sure you've got someone, maybe a boss or a parent that says things, but then doesn't really follow up what they do all the time, right?

It's one thing to speak words of authority, but then another to live it out. And so as Matthew switches from speech back to story from chapters eight onwards, we see now the Messiah's words put into action.

[11 : 07] And so here in chapters eight onwards, in our passage, we get face to face with God's promised king, who doesn't just teach and preach with authority, but now he's gonna show us he's got power to heal with authority and the compassion to do it as well.

I wonder if you've ever had the experience of scrolling social media and wondered why maybe like the same ads keep popping up. One time I was, I think I was searching for, you know, I was looking at how much it costs to hire a camper van.

And then before you knew it, it was like juicy, juicy, juicy. You know, I'm like, how do you know this? How do you know what I'm doing? Okay. Well, I wonder if you've been curious about why some foods, when you go to the supermarket, they get put at eye level in the supermarket, right?

And others that get tucked in the top shelf. What supermarkets and Facebook both know is that placement matters. Placement matters. And Matthew too knows that placement matters because I think in our passage that Josh just read, he's actually done something interesting here, hasn't he? Out of all the gospel writers, Matthew alone has chosen to place three different healing encounters, one after the other. Did you notice that? Did you notice that?

[12 : 23] How he strings these three healings together. They actually appear in slightly different places if you read it, the gospel of Mark and the gospel of Luke. But Matthew alone strings these three together, I think, to make a point.

And this is the main point of the sermon. Jesus has power to heal the outcast, the outsider, and the overlooked because he is the suffering servant God has promised.

I'll say that again. Jesus has power to heal the outcast, the outsider, and the overlooked because he is the suffering servant God has promised.

And I want us to see this together from the text. So we're going to go through each of these stories and then we'll kind of sum it up and see what shows us about Jesus' authority, his compassion, and his promises for our lives today as well.

So keep your Bibles open at Matthew chapter 8 and we'll follow along. I'm going to read the first few verses again. This is God's word. When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him.

[13 : 26] A man of leprosy came and knelt before him and said, Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean. Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

I am willing, he said. Be clean. Immediately, he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, see that you don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded as a testimony to them.

We live in a really safe country at the moment. Most of us have yet to experience the pain and suffering of actually having COVID-19. But for those of you who know someone who's wrestling or struggle with COVID right now or have maybe recovered from it, if you hear their stories, you'll hear a familiar refrain, a familiar progression of events.

It starts with the coughing. It's kind of a hacking cough that doesn't go away. Then they talk about the loss of taste and smell. Maybe body aches. If it gets more and more serious, it's a struggle to breathe.

But for those who recover, it's not just a virus that brings pain and suffering. It's actually what happens afterwards. Afterwards, when you've been outed as a COVID-positive person, there's a stigma.

[14 : 46] For some people, your friends and family stop coming near. Neighbours will refuse to go near you. You might even be kicked out of your apartment. If you're a healthcare worker, you might be told, don't live here, please.

There's a fear around this disease, even now. And this kind of response to a COVID-positive person would have been very familiar, okay, to this man in verse 2, who we're told has leprosy. Leprosy in Greek is a catch-all phrase for all kinds of skin disease. So I don't know whether it's officially what we'd call today Hans' disease, but it's definitely something that has affected him and scarred him.

And the key thing to notice is that for this person, it's bad enough that he's not named among the large crowd that follow Jesus, right? Sermon on the Mount, big crowd, he's not there. He doesn't go close.

He can't go close. All right? So this guy with leprosy, I'll call him Uncle Lee, maybe, he's been socially distancing, right? Because Jewish law was crystal clear.

[15 : 51] Leviticus 14 says, if you have a skin infection or skin disease, you are marked off as unclean among God's people. So he hangs out. He stays back.

And yet he has heard of Jesus' authority to teach, to preach, to heal. That's the pattern we see in Matthew's Gospel. Perhaps when Matthew 4, 24, when news was spreading all over Syria, all over the surrounding regions, Mr. Lee, he got word and he comes from his place of hiding where he's been in self-isolation.

He runs out and he looks for Jesus. And when he finds him, it says here in verse 2, he kneels before him. Now, the NIV translation isn't great on this word because the original word here we've seen actually before in Matthew's Gospel.

It's actually the same word we saw three times in chapter 2. I wonder if you remember in chapter 2 what happens there. There's a couple of wise guys from the east. They come, they follow a star and what do they do?

They come to the baby Jesus to worship him. Worship him. It's more than just kneeling down. It's the same word here. They come and worship. I think that's what this man is doing too.

[17 : 05] And Jesus' response to this man is stunning. Remember, there's large crowds who've been following Jesus. They're probably in the nicest skin, but I'm sure they had lots of issues too.

And yet Jesus reaches out, not to someone in the crowd, he reaches out to this person on the outside, this helpless and incurable person. And he says, I'm willing.

Be clean. And I don't know how you feel today, but maybe you, maybe you don't have a skin disease, but maybe you feel like you're an outcast as well.

Perhaps you've been fat shamed. Maybe you're being bullied right now. Maybe you've been wrestling with particular demons in your mind. Or you just feel helpless, like you don't really fit in, even though you're here.

I want to say the Bible says Jesus reaches out for people like you, for outcasts like you. He cares for people like you who do not feel accepted into a community.

[18 : 12] And Jesus, the real Jesus, he's strong, he's kind too. And when you and I are willing to bow before him, to worship him, he is able, he is willing to heal and to cleanse and to restore you.

That's what God's word says. In the next scene, we see, as we move on from the first few verses, we see from verse 5, another healing.

Matthew directs us from a physical outcast, someone who's physically left out because of his condition, to someone who's also on the outside, but socially. Let me read it for you and hopefully you'll see.

When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him asking for help. Lord, he said, my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.

Jesus said to him, I will go and heal him. If you've ever been the only Asian person, maybe, at a friend's birthday party, you might know what this centurion's feeling like.

[19 : 21] I want you to remember the context here. We're here, we're in the first century Jewish area. Capernaum is a town which is mainly a Jewish town.

And then you've got this guy from Rome or from a Roman background. And so he's just one guy surrounded by people who are not from his own culture.

The centurion, he's not a Jew, he's part of the enemy troops, as it were. He's paid to keep law and order for Rome here in this tiny backwater town called Capernaum.

And the centurion is wealthy enough, it says in verse 8, he can afford servants. He's powerful enough, it says, that he can have at least 100, maybe 80, to 100 soldiers under his command, right?

Verse 9. And yet he finds himself in a situation where his money and his power can't solve. And so with unbelievable humility, the centurion, this powerful person in the world's eyes, he goes to Jesus and asks for help, for help on behalf of his suffering servant boy.

[20 : 32] You see that? And notice how the story continues though, okay? There's actually like a two-step nature to his conversation with Jesus that Matthew and Luke's gospel has the same account as well.

They both highlight this. So it says here, he goes up to, you know, to Jesus and makes this request and Jesus, verse 7, says to him, I'll go and heal him. But see what happens next.

The centurion actually replies in essence with this. He says, look, I'm an army officer. I know how authority works, right? That's part of my job. It's my job title.

I have authority over troops. And now I don't deserve any more of your kindness, Jesus. But I know that you, Jesus, you have authority to heal him right now with a word without even coming to my house.

And at that point, Jesus is amazed and he does what he says. Imagine that. Of all the people, of all the crowds following Jesus, it's a non-Israelite outsider who sees something that all kinds of people don't see.

[21 : 44] Jesus is not just a good teacher. He has God's authority. And Jesus praises the centurion for this faith, right? Look at verse 10.

He says, when Jesus heard this, he was amazed. He was astonished. This is actually the first time in Matthew's gospel that Jesus is described as amazed. So it's important.

The first time Jesus is amazed is when an outsider accepts Jesus' authority. And as he says that he's amazed, what he goes on to say in the next few verses shows us actually that he's amazed at this outsider's authority but he's also not so subtly rebuking or scolding all those people who have been following him who think they're in the kingdom of heaven.

You see what's going on there? Jesus doesn't name the particular culprits here but we're going to see in future sections that they're going to include people like the teachers of the law, right?

9 verse 3. Like the Pharisees 9 verse 11. These middle managers of Jewish religion who were thinking no, we hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Actually, Jesus says you've got it the wrong way around.

[23 : 00] Maybe you're the outcasts. Maybe you're the outsiders. You who think you know it all. And it's not the first time Matthew records mixed responses to Jesus. From the time he was born, do you remember?

From the moment he was born, there were people in power and authority who already felt threatened by him. That's the story of King Herod, right? In chapter 2, for example. And even this early on in his ministry, Jesus is already attracting the wrong kind of attention.

And I think it goes to show that for each of us, when we come face to face with the real Jesus, we'll either be attracted to his authority or we're going to be threatened by it.

Where do you sit? Right? It's worth searching our own hearts. How do you and I respond to the authority of Jesus? Does Jesus healing miraculously challenge your beliefs about this world, about how scientifically explainable everything is?

Spoiler alert, there's more to come. Or maybe when you hear all this, does Jesus crossing social boundaries, crossing ethnic boundaries, does that scare you?

[24 : 14] Because you need to control who you hang out with, which circles that you should belong to and are welcome, who should be accepted into your family. How do you respond to Jesus' power and authority here?

These are challenges from Matthew's Gospel. I mean, think about it this way. If your real reason for being near Jesus is for your own power.

I don't know, maybe you just want to be near Jesus to impress somebody. You've come to church so you can just achieve something else. Maybe you want to follow Jesus, but really, your real reason to follow Jesus is not to submit to his authority, but just to stay in charge of it, of your life. I'm sorry, then you have misread Jesus. And you have misread Jesus. And maybe you might think you're in the kingdom of heaven, but your eternal future lies far away in darkness, tears, and agony. Be warned. Be warned. But if like the centurion, the outsider, you're willing to recognize that Jesus is the true authority, trust that he has power over life and death, then that is the kind of, that is the kind of faith Jesus wants in us.

[25 : 33] A faith that's humble, amazing, and perhaps life-changing. I wonder what the first thing you do after you come home from a busy day is.

So, just imagine your routine, maybe on a Monday afternoon or night when you finish school or work. And what do you do? Do you dump your bag on the floor? And do you kind of put some up boots on and get comfy?

Do you just grab your phone and plug it in the wall and charge it? So, have a think. Have a think. Because we kind of have this kind of moment here, don't we, as we move from one scene to another.

When Jesus came into Peter's house is how verse 14 starts. And here Matthew kind of changes the scene as we follow him into a very intimate setting, into the front door of Peter's own house in Capernaum.

I don't know. So maybe for Peter, maybe he's scrubbing off his sandals, right? He's still buzzing from seeing Uncle Lee's changed skin condition. You know, it's amazing. And then as he comes in, he's chatting with his brother Andrew.

[26 : 35] He's like, wow, did you just see that? That was amazing. All right. How about, man, that was exactly what he said on the Sermon on the Mount. You know, they're just chatting away, you know, getting comfy in their home. And they're thinking in their hearts, man, we made the right call, didn't we?

To drop our nets and follow Jesus. Man, this is great. And they're just getting comfy, getting in. And yet someone else is at home too. And they're just reminded. Maybe there's a bit of a cry of pain from the other room.

And verse 14 tells us who it is. Peter's mother-in-law sat in bed with a high fever. And maybe at this point, Peter and Andrew, they look at each other and they sigh.

What do we do? We've left our nets to follow Jesus, i.e. we've quit our jobs to follow Jesus. We're not earning money. What do we do with mum? Do we even have money to go check out her fever? This is where they're at, you see, the cost of following Jesus. And maybe here, they're at an impasse. What do we do? They're not sure. And yet Jesus, I think he does something amazing here, doesn't he?

[27 : 42] He says here, he touched her hand, verse 15, and the fever left her and she got up and began to serve him. I love that little line, she began to serve him.

The word there is to serve, literally, she deaconed, you know, she began to deacon, to serve. I think one of the tragedies in our world right now, right, actually one of the tragedies, even as vaccines come out for COVID, is it's actually shown how unfair the world is when it comes to healing.

I mean, while we sit in here and we wait for our group four thing to pop up with life-saving vaccines to pump into our arms, millions of people worldwide are crying for any vaccine.

As we debate, you know, which vaccine is better than others and share WhatsApp messages and why we shouldn't get this or that one, millions of people would love any chance of healing.

Right? And the sad truth is this, right now, the best vaccines have mostly gone to countries that can afford it, right? So that's why I find it amazing that Peter's mother-in-law is included.

[28 : 56] Jesus has the heart to even touch her. The way Jesus works, the way he shows his power to heal, he does not go to the highest bidder. He does not go to the richest people.

He doesn't just heal the wealthy and the well-to-do, the people with private insurance. His healing strategy may seem stupid to us, but it is amazing. He looks for the outcast, the outsider, the overlooked, because they're the ones that actually end up worshipping him, end up trusting his authority, end up serving him.

All right? And verse 16 tells us his strategy is so successful that Peter's house becomes like the first overnight A&E.; Everyone comes. They bring all their problems. What does it say?

Right? When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits of the word and healed all the sick. But here's the climax of the passage. Verse 17. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases. We've talked about this before, how Matthew loves to say this word, fulfilled.

[30 : 08] All right? This was to fulfill what was spoken. Remember that this was written originally to first century, probably Jewish background believers who needed reassurance, you know, as the world was crumbling around them.

You can trust God. He keeps his promises. That is the kind of God he is. And so that's why Matthew keeps saying this is to fulfill. This is to fulfill. Right? When a prophet says God will be with us, right? Jesus is born as Emmanuel. God is with us. Matthew chapter 1. When the prophet Isaiah sees a king who's a servant, right? Isaiah 53. That's the vision he gets many hundreds of years ago of someone who surely took up our pain and bore our suffering.

Those are the words from Isaiah 53 verse 4. Matthew tells us right here that even in Jesus' early ministry, you could see that he was this kind of person.

He was this person. Powerful, yet gentle. Strong, yet kind. Strong enough to heal the deepest hurts, yet caring enough to reach out to those who needed it most.

[31 : 16] You see, almost famous Jesus, right? He was way more than just a healer. He is God's promised servant king and yet he has compassion to bear our pain and carry our hurts.

not only does Jesus fulfill Isaiah 53 verse 4, what does this passage go on to say? Some of you will know. It's full of all the servant's other descriptions of his character, right?

What does it say next? Isaiah 53 verse 4. It continues. It says, surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities, our sins. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Matthew's point is this.

[32 : 27] Jesus here is the same as the servant who takes up our weaknesses and illnesses like no one else could because ultimately he is a suffering servant who will one day be punished by God himself.

That is a trajectory. That is the direction of Matthew's gospel. The same Jesus will be pierced for our transgressions. You need to know this. This is the good news. You see, thousands of years before Jesus' birth, Isaiah has already painted this picture.

There will be a servant who will heal yet he himself will suffer. Who will bring peace and shalom yet be crushed for our sins himself.

Who is the only one on earth who could do this. Right? Only Jesus could have power to heal and compassion to save. And so because Matthew brings this prophecy up at this point, we need to remember the full picture.

Jesus' power to heal physical illnesses is meant to point to his ultimate power and purpose to heal our spiritual condition. Our cancer, as it were.

[33 : 34] Our problem of sin in our hearts that needs the healer's touch. The man of sorrows to be pierced for our sins in our place on the cross.

I think there's two kind of applications on this. One is this. One application is this. When people ask me, for example, does this passage mean we should pray for people's healing and expect the same results today?

Can we expect this? What I say to them is, yes, but read. Yes, we can help, but only Jesus can heal. Read Matthew 8, 17.

Okay? What I mean is this, right? God's word welcomes us to pray for the healing of people. We join in this. Pray for physical illnesses to be healed because Jesus is strong and he is kind and in his name there is healing and he has power to heal.

We do not deny this. We pray into it. And in fact, in chapter 8, sorry, chapter 10, we'll hear soon, Jesus actually commands his disciples to go out and bring this same authority to the world and healing.

[34 : 48] And actually, if you talk to brothers and sisters, missionaries in countries far off that are still hearing the gospel for the first time, closed nations like Iran and North Korea and Central Asia where owning a Bible could kill you, where I could not do this openly.

Missionaries share story after story of prayers for healing being miraculously answered and people coming to Christ because they see he has power to heal and compassion to serve them.

You see? So I don't want us to put the Son of God in a box. All right? That maybe, in our Western world, it's easy to do. We can enjoy and thank God for all the ways he heals.

For medicine, for healthcare, for vaccines. And yet, when a friend asks for prayer because there is no other hope, we're going to join in. It is a privilege to pray in Jesus' name for healing in his name. Right? Yes, we can help. But, only Jesus can heal. We have a range of views here. Whatever your views or experiences with healing or even casting out demons as described here, all of us have to acknowledge at least one thing.

[35 : 59] I'm not Jesus. You're not Jesus. We're not Jesus. Right? It's a brave or foolish person, I think, who claims the same instant power as Jesus to heal the same way he did. Right?

Yes, we can help. But only Jesus can heal. Only he has the authority to do what he does, to make a point. And so, whatever it looks like, every healing under God's sovereign care, whether it's through vaccines, whether it's through medicines, whether it's through other miraculous ways, all of this is meant to point us, point the healed people to the suffering servant, the true healer, the one who has power to heal our ultimate sickness.

That's why many missionaries go out as doctors and nurses and midwives. They go out to heal physically, and people at the same time hear the life-saving message of spiritual healing in Christ. Yes, we can help, but only Jesus can heal. Right? So, read Matthew 8, 17, if you forget. So, I think that's the first application. It helps us rethink how we perceive spiritual healing.

I think the final point, and as a church, we need to recognize this. Matthew's storytelling makes us consider Jesus' authority to heal, but not just his authority, his compassion to, doesn't it?

[37 : 18] who does he reach out to? The outcasts, the overlooked, the outsider. If you study church history, you will notice the biggest triumph of the early church is not how much authority Christians had in Jesus' name.

Actually, many of them did not have any authority. They were being crushed by the Roman Empire at the time, and yet how they grew is they showed not authority in Jesus' name, they showed compassion in Jesus' name.

They were the first ones to, in plagues that swept through the ancient world, it was Christians who played the Jesus melody. What did they do? They jumped in, they risked their lives and helped to cure and feed and clothe the sick and dying.

They helped to care for the widows and orphans they left behind. And so, a really easy question to ask is this, are we showing that same compassion? How are we doing in this pandemic?

Are you and I joining in in some way and bringing healing in his name? Or do we spend most of our time spreading hurt and division instead as PCVC?

[38 : 25] I don't know. I think if we were honest, many of us, if we admit it, we don't play Jesus' tune as well as we should. I think if we scroll through our last hundred messages, it would reveal how many of them have gone to someone on the outside, someone who's overlooked.

Have a think about it. And can I say this, one way you'll know if you are going deeper into following Jesus is that your heart for people on the outside grows.

That's how you know if you're actually following Jesus. So how do you treat someone who is new to this church? how do you care for a family member who's really hard to love?

How do you, you know, how often do you step outside your comfort zone to reach out to a neighbour? How friendly are you to the classmate that has no friends?

These are all a way to see if you're truly leaning into Jesus' compassion and not just his authority. Friends, we get anxious, don't we, about all kinds of things, our health, our safety, our reputation.

[39 : 38] And yet, if even not yet famous Jesus had the power to heal all these kinds of people and the compassion to do it, then there's no one better to follow, to worship, to submit to, to serve.

There's no better role model on how to share God's compassion with friends and family and to point them to the most powerful name there is, the name of Jesus Christ, our King, our suffering servant, our Lord.

Let me pray. Father, we thank you for your word and how rich it is. Lord, as I've stumbled over these words, I want to remember that you have power to heal and you have compassion to serve all those right here who need your healing touch.

Father, would you help us remember we are helpless to control our life, our circumstances, our careers, our school results. Could you help us submit to your power to heal? Help us to know that you are loving and gracious and merciful. Remind us that you suffered for us on the cross and help us to follow you more deeply.
[40 : 57] I pray all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.