School of Life 2013-2014

**Foundations:** Exploring the Foursquare Gospel (Fall and Winter)

**Christ in Culture:** Connecting Jesus to Life (Spring)

Pastor James Walton
New Life Foursquare Church
Canby, Oregon
15
The Healing Encounters in the Gospels

We’ll spend this lesson and next looking at various instances of healing records as they’re found in the Gospels (this week) and the Book of Acts and beyond (next week).

My objective is to familiarize you with the broad scope of Jesus’ healing ministry, what our relationship to it is, and of course, to fall more in love with His glorious grace. Let’s get started by asking a basic question:

**Does Jesus Want to Heal?**

The short answer is yes. The divine disposition towards wholeness is clearly expressed in several healing encounters, let’s look at one:

*And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.*

(Mark 1:40-45, ESV, see the parallel passages in Matthew 8:2-4 and Luke 5:12-15)
Leprosy was the name given throughout Scripture to several skin diseases. It’s different than the leprosy we know today, but it was still a horrible sentence upon an individual, for it meant that they were ‘unclean’ and therefore kept from participation within their faith community, unable to work, and resigned to a life of poverty. Lepers were commanded in Leviticus 13 to:

*The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’*

Leviticus 13:35, ESV

All this to say, one does not simply get approached by a leper. Watch the way Jesus responds, He is moved with pity, and He *reaches out His hand and touches the leper.* Recall the reasons why lepers were forced to live alone outside the camp: to prevent their disease from spreading through human contact. Thus Jesus violates a well-established societal barrier because His compassion for the hurting man compels Him. His willingness to heal is right there on the surface, regardless of how it may inconvenience Him.

Rather than become contaminated by the leprosy,* Jesus’ healing power frees the man from what afflicts him. The result is that the disease immediately leaves the man and he was made clean. This meant more than just a medical diagnosis, but a wholesale renewal of life. Thus, Jesus was swamped with others needing a healing touch.

Bottom line: Jesus desires to heal. When we approach Him with our sicknesses and suffering, we can do so boldly (Hebrews 4:14-16), knowing that He desires our welfare. This is not tantamount to a guarantee of immediate cure, for there are instances in which Jesus either passed by a sick person for a season (see Acts 3:1-10) or declined the petition

* OT geeks will want to refer to Haggai 2:10-13 for an interesting case study in how the ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ interact with one another. There, the ‘unclean’ can make the ‘clean’ contaminated, but the ‘clean’ cannot purify the ‘unclean.’ Jesus, because He’s awesome, can make the unclean clean.
for healing altogether (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Nevertheless, it is God’s disposition to bring healing.

**Bunny Trail: What Did Jesus Say and Do, Anyway?**

Before we get too much further along, let’s pause to try to answer the question, what was the central component of Jesus’ teachings, and what was the primary trademark of his activity?

The core of the teaching of Christ is the Kingdom of God.*

It was the first thing off His lips at the inauguration of His ministry:

*From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*  
Matthew 4:17, ESV

And it was the last thing He was teaching on before He ascended:

*He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*  
Acts 1:3, ESV

But the words of Jesus were established and reinforced by the works of Jesus. And what was the primary work He did? Jesus healed people.

*“Indeed it is estimated that more than 31 percent of the verses in Mark’s Gospel involve miracles in some way, or some 40% of his narrative!”**

In sum, the words of Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the works of Jesus verified that fact. Jesus healed and liberated as evidence that a new order had arrived, a new King was taking back territory and jurisdiction from the Evil One. He said so Himself:
Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. 15 But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,” 16 while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. 17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. 18 And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. 19 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. 20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; 22 but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. 23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Luke 11:14-23, ESV

Satan is the “strong man” in verse 21, and Jesus is the “one stronger than he” whose advent was an attack upon Satan’s rule over humanity.* Jesus broke the power of Satan’s authority, and healed and exorcised as expressions of His rule as the rightful King, liberating humanity to be fully free under the authority of God. Without breaking into a fuller conversation in the role of spiritual warfare in divine healing, let’s just remember that Jesus has defeated Satan at the Cross, and those who live by faith in the Kingdom of God can be free from Satan’s influence.

**Jesus Heals Many**

Consider that much of the first half of each of the Gospels (especially Mark and Luke) concern themselves recounting stories of Jesus healing people. Also remember that John

* This is not to say that all sickness is demonic in origin, or a result of an individual’s sin. The whole episode of John 9 is the biblical antidote for the misguided notion that a person’s misfortune is a result of their misbehavior (or Satanic influence).
adds an editorial comment on how much is being left out of the record:

Now *Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;* 31 *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John 20:30–31, ESV

**Now there are also many other things that Jesus did.**

*Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*

John 21:25, ESV

Thus, at various points throughout the Gospels, we’ll see the writers condense a great deal of healings into a brief accounting. Let’s look at several.

*And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.* 24 *So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.* 25 *And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.*

Matthew 4:23–25, ESV

*And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who came to bear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.*

Luke 6:17–19, ESV
Two observations out of these texts:

- Jesus was willing to heal anyone who came. Both passages refer to foreigners (“Syria,” “Decapolis,” and “beyond the Jordan” in Matthew; “Tyre and Sidon” in Luke) who heard of Jesus’ fame and came to be healed by Him. Jesus placed no preclusions of birth, nationality and worthiness for them to be healed. He simply healed them.

- Healing came through an encounter with Jesus. The touching of Jesus’ robe or clothes for healing is referenced in Luke, and again in Matthew 14:36 and Luke 8:43-48. Unlike others who purported to be healers of the day, Jesus used no incantations, no magic formulas, no hokus-pokus. He simply commanded healing to happen or it came forth from Him.* In this way, Jesus stands unique among all healers.

* Even then, there’s no formula for how Jesus would heal. He often used props, (mud, mud and saliva), he could heal from a distance, or heal on behalf of someone else’s faith. There’s no limit of time or space that God cannot cross to bring healing.

**Matthew 14:14, Luke 7:11-17

Jesus Heals Individuals

Jesus’ typical M.O. was to walk from place to place, talk with His disciples, eat meals with friends and enemies, encounter anyone crossed His path, and intersect His Kingdom life with theirs. Jesus’ compassion prompted many of His healing encounters** but the larger arc of His purpose centered on bringing about the redemption found by those under the rightful rule of God, and reversing the curse placed upon mankind at the Fall. Jesus wasn’t a do-gooder, He was a good-bringer.

Let’s look at one smaller and one larger healing incident to close:

*And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. 15 He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began...*
to serve him. 16 That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.” Matthew 8:14-17, ESV

This episode is repeated in three of the Gospels* and is notable for several reason:

• Unlike blindness, lameness, deafness, muteness, or death, a fever doesn’t exactly rate high on the “this-is-an-emergency” scale. Yet Jesus sees a need, however slight, and meets it, with just a touch of His hand.

• That the person healed is a woman is significant. Women were highly marginalized in the 1st century** so the fact that Jesus notices this woman without being prompted to attend to her, and that He’s comfortable enough to gently touch her hand are both signs of Jesus tremendous concern for both genders.

• Her immediate response of hopping up to serve Jesus (and presumably the rather large group of disciples with Him) is a helpful model for our response to God’s touch in our lives. We reciprocate thanksgiving to God through service to others; we have been healed, and so we seek the welfare of others; we have received love and kindness, and so we extend that to others.

Let’s look at one more healing miracle:

Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. 12 As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. 13 And when the Lord saw


** You may (rightly) argue that women are highly marginalized in most every century, but that’s a discussion for a different time.
her, be had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.”

And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

Luke 7:11-17

- Notice that the primary character here is the woman. The loss of her “only son” meant that, much like a leper, she was in a very difficult and vulnerable place. Jesus’ compassion stops the funeral bier, and he speaks to the dead man, who then sits up. Jesus completes the transaction by presenting the man to his mother.*

- Resurrections are always subject to cynicism, something that Luke (a physician by trade) may be trying allay with how he structures the narrative. Notice the young man is not recently expired on his bed somewhere, but being carried off to his tomb. This would imply that he had been verifiably dead for a significant period of time, and thus did not swoon and suddenly awake at Jesus’ coming. Notice also that Luke makes mention not only of the “great crowd” following Jesus, but the “considerable crowd” of citizens of Nain who were joining the funeral march. It was in front of all these people, not in some hidden room, that Jesus performed this miracle.

- The response of this crowd is definite: they were filled with fear and glorified God, claiming that He had visited His people. As we pray for healing, our response to Emmanuel (God with us) is glory and gratitude.

*That phrase, and the whole episode in general, bear a striking resemblance to when Elijah’s raised a widow’s son in 1 Kings 17:17-24.
Key Points to Remember

• Jesus desires to, and delights in, healing His people.

• Jesus’ overarching agenda was to proclaim the arrival of the Kingdom of God; healings and exorcisms were proof that a new ruler had arrived, bringing with Him the wholeness mankind forfeited at the Fall.

• Jesus’ healing ministry knew no boundaries: He healed whomever, wherever, whenever, by whatever means.

Reflection

• When was the last time you prayed for a healing? What was the result?

• How does the teaching that God always desires to heal square with your experience in this area?

Further Reading

• Miracles by Craig Keener may take you two years to work through, but by golly, it’s probably worth it.
Appendix: All the Healing Encounters in the Gospel*

**Narrated in One Gospel**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two blind men</td>
<td>9:27-31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mute demoniac</td>
<td>9:32-33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf and mute man</td>
<td>7:31-37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind man</td>
<td>8:22-26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow’s son raised from the dead</td>
<td></td>
<td>7:11-16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman bowed over</td>
<td></td>
<td>13:11-17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man with dropsy</td>
<td></td>
<td>14:1-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten lepers</td>
<td></td>
<td>17:11-19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear of the servant of High Priest</td>
<td></td>
<td>22:50-51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobleman’s Son</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4:46-54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crippled man at Bethesda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5:1-15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man born blind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9:1-38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazarus raised from the dead</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11:1-45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrated in Two Gospels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonic in synagogue, Capernaum</td>
<td></td>
<td>1:23-27</td>
<td>4:33-36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centurion’s servant</td>
<td>8:5-13</td>
<td></td>
<td>7:1-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind and mute demoniac</td>
<td>12:122,23</td>
<td></td>
<td>11:1-14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrophoenician woman’s daughter</td>
<td>15:21-28</td>
<td>7:24-30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Magdalene</td>
<td></td>
<td>16:9</td>
<td>8:2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The following tables are taken from *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, 380-381. This core text for Foursquare was written by seasoned saints, Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. VanCleave.*
## Narrated in Three Gospels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The leper</td>
<td>8:2-4</td>
<td>1:40-45</td>
<td>5:12-15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter’s Mother in Law</td>
<td>8:14-15</td>
<td>1:29-31</td>
<td>4:38-39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man with legion of demons</td>
<td>8:28-34</td>
<td>5:1-20</td>
<td>8:26-39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palsied man</td>
<td>9:2-8</td>
<td>2:1-12</td>
<td>5:17-26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman with the issue of blood</td>
<td>9:20-22</td>
<td>5:25-34</td>
<td>8:43-48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jairus’ daughter raised from the dead</td>
<td>9:23-26</td>
<td>5:35-43</td>
<td>8:49-56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonic child</td>
<td>17:14-21</td>
<td>9:14-29</td>
<td>9:37-43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind Bartimaeus</td>
<td>20:20-34</td>
<td>10:46-52</td>
<td>18:35-43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these specific instances, there are several references to occasions when Jesus healed large groups of people at one time*