 He Took Up Our Infirmities

Matthew 8:1-17

Key Verse: 8:17 “This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

From today we’ll study about Jesus’ healing ministry. In Jesus’ healing the sick Matthew teaches us who Jesus really is. Today’s passage shows three episodes of Jesus’ healing, and Matthew saw this as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah.

First, I am willing. Be clean! (1-4) Jesus finished preaching the Sermon on the Mount. When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. What was Jesus supposed to think about them when he saw the crowd? According to Mark 6:34 Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. I believe that you also have compassion on wandering students when you see them with the eyes of Jesus. Look at verse 2. “***A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean***.” A man with leprosy, we call ‘a leper’, came to Jesus and knelt before him for healing. Moses’ law strongly forbids lepers appearing in public. They were excommunicated to live in a quarantine. This is because leprosy is a contagious disease like Covid 19. Leprosy destroys the nerve system and tissue. As a result, lepers don’t feel any pain until their nose and toes fall off. In the past and at present lepers have been completely separated from their society, even from their family.

We don’t know how this leper broke the wall of the crowd and appeared before Jesus. By doing this he violated Moses’ law. But he didn’t mind if only he could meet Jesus. He risked his life to be stoned to death according to Moses’ law. But he didn’t mind if only he could be healed. Many people around him were shocked and shouted, “Unclean! Unclean! Keep away from us!” But the leper didn’t care what they thought about him and shouted. He said to Jesus, ‘*Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean*.” In his words we learn his strong faith in Jesus’ healing power. He did not doubt Jesus' power. What really mattered to him was Jesus’ willingness. He was not sure if Jesus could accept him. He believed Jesus as the Messiah by calling him, ‘Lord.’ But he was not sure if Jesus was willing to heal him.

What was Jesus’ response? Look at verse 3. “***Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said, “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.***” Not only Jesus welcomed him, but also he touched him. “He touched me!” In the past no one was willing to touch this man because he was a leper. Moses’ law forbids even approaching him. But Jesus touched him because he wanted to heal him, not only from leprosy, but also from his brokenness. This man was leprous not only physically but also spiritually. He thought he was cursed by God. He was sorrowful and lonely because no one wanted to be with him. He had to live with other lepers in quarantine all the days of his life. But Jesus touched him. When Jesus touched him, a miracle happened. His whole body and soul were cleansed with the love of God. It was the first time for him to experience that God loves him.

Jesus said, “*I am willing. Be clean*!” Here we learn that Jesus is always willing to touch us and heal us. What really matters to us is our willingness. In fact, we don’t have to ask Jesus, “Lord, if you are willing,” because Jesus is always willing. Sin is often compared to leprosy. This is because sin destroys our body and soul. Sin is also contagious and spread to other people. Sin disfigures our body and soul. Even though people know well that the price of sin is death, they continue to sin. What really matters with them is their unwillingness for healing. They do not want to repent. They do not want to come to Jesus. They just lie down on the mat of death. In John 5 when Jesus visited the pool of Bethesda, he met a paralyzed man for 38 years. He was lying down at the pool for 38 years. Jesus asked him, “*Do you want to get well*?” Jesus planted a desire for healing in his heart. The paralyzed man was not willing to be healed. He just complained and blamed others. Jesus rebuked him and said, ‘*Get up. Pick up your mat and walk’. He got up and walked*. (Jn 5:1-9) Today I want all of you to hear Jesus’ words and be healed from your leprosy and paralysis. “*I am willing. Be clean*!” Consider what makes your body and soul be leprous and paralyzed? If you are willing, Jesus can make you clean. If you come to Jesus, he will touch you and heal you. Jeremiah 29:13 says, “*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*.” Proverbs 8:17 also says, “*I love those who love me and those who seek me find me*.” Amen!

Look at verse 4. “***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***.” The leper was so happy that he wanted to tell everyone whom he met. But Jesus asked him not to tell anyone because it was too early to reveal himself as the Messiah. Instead Jesus asked him to show himself to the priest for the certificate of healing and to offer God according to Moses’ law. In this way Jesus gave this man a new life with a new body. This reminds me of Jesus’ words, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*” (Jn 10:10) Amen!

Second, such a great faith of a centurion (5-13) Jesus’ healing ministry continues in Capernaum. When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. (5) A centurion usually had no business with Jesus. A centurion was a Roman commander with 100 soldiers under him. Roman centurions were tough and merciless. Centurions in Judea were tougher than any other soldiers because of frequent insurrection of the Jews. Roman centurions didn’t care about the death or injury of Jewish native. But this centurion was different. Look at verse 6. “***Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.***” The centurion visited Jesus for the sake of his sick servant. He could have sent him off to be replaced with another healthy servant. But he took care of his servant to the end. He had compassion on his servant.

***Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him***?” (7) How did the centurion respond to Jesus? Look at verses 8-9. “***The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the 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.***” According to his words, we learn two things from this centurion. First, he was very humble. He was a Roman commander and Jesus is a Jewish rabbi. But the centurion said that he did not deserve to have Jesus come under his roof. Second, he was well aware of the power of authority. He controlled 100 soldiers under his authority. He believed in the power of Jesus’ authority. This is the reason why he said, “*But just say the word, and my servant will be healed*.”

What was Jesus’ response to his reply? Look at verse 10. “***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 a great faith.***” Jesus was amazed by the great faith of the centurion. Jesus was amazed because the centurion was not a Jew, but a gentile. Many Jewish leaders didn’t believe in Jesus even though he performed many miracles before them. But this centurion believed that Jesus had the power to heal the sick. Jesus was also amazed by his faith in the power of Jesus’ word. He said that Jesus didn’t need to come, but just say the word, then his servant would be healed. Faith in Jesus’ word brings miracles. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth with his words. Psalm 33:6-9 says, “*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth…For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm*.” In John’s gospel Jesus was described as the Word, who created all things in heaven and the earth. (Jn 1:1-4) Even though we have heard and studied this passage many times, some of us still don’t believe in God’s word. But the centurion, who didn’t have any chance to hear Jesus’ word regularly, believed that Jesus is the Word who made everything on this earth and that he had the power of healing the sick.

Personally, I believe in the power of Jesus’ words. I believe those who listen to Jesus’ words will rise again. I believe those who hear his words and obey will experience miracles. So, I ask for Jesus' visit to those who are sick. Jesus said in John 5:24 which says, “*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.*” Amen!

What happened to the centurion and his servant next? Look at verse 13. “***Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.***” Jesus blessed the centurion’s faith. Jesus healed his servant the moment he said, ‘*Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would*.’ Remember that God blesses our intercessory prayer for those who are sick. Jesus blessed the centurion’s faith for his sick servant. James 5:14-16 says, “*Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up…The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*.”

Third, he took up our infirmities (14-17) Jesus’ healing ministry continues. Jesus entered Peter’s house and saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. Peter’s mother-in-law might have had a fever since his son-in-law left everything to follow Jesus. Jesus was very busy in healing and teaching. He didn’t have any personal time for himself. Still, he cared for his disciple’s needs. **Jesus touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.** (15) Whoever Jesus touched was healed. Jesus touched the leper and he was healed. When Jesus’ word touched the servant, he was healed. Jesus touched Peter’s mother-in-law and she was healed. I pray that all those who are sick may be touched by Jesus so that they all may be healed.

**When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick**. (16) Last week two UBF doctor missionaries received an honorable award from the Korean government. They are missionary Dr. Samuel Yoo in Ethiopia and Dr. Matthew Lim in Uganda.        Dr. Yoo served more than 30 years as a medical doctor in Uganda and Ethiopia, and Dr. Lim as a chief doctor in Bethesda Hospital in Uganda. They have healed numerous patients in Africa for several decades. They all followed the footstep of Jesus who healed the sick. When St. Matthew saw Jesus who had healed all the sick, he remembered the prophecy of Isaiah. Look at verse 17. “***This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases***.” This verse was quoted from Isaiah 53:4. Prophet Isaiah who lived 700 BC had prophesied about Jesus who took up our infirmities and bore our diseases. The Jews expected a powerful and strong messiah who could bring freedom for Israel. But God sent their messiah as a man of sorrow who was familiar with suffering. Their messiah came to take our sins in his body and carry our diseases. Finally, the Promised Messiah was crucified for our sins and died in our place. Peter, who came to realize this later, wrote his letter to the scattered Christians. In 1 Peter 2:24 he said, “*He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.*”

There is no one who is perfectly healthy. Brother Yangwon looks healthy and strong among us, still he may suffer from small sickness. There is no one righteous, not even one. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. In the same way we are all sick physically, mentally, and spiritually. Some have minor, and others chronic. We all need healing and the Messiah’s mercy. Today I want all of you to come to Jesus and ask for healing whatever you are struggling physically, mentally, or spiritually. Jesus is willing to heal you, touch you, and save you. We must come to Jesus by faith. We must believe in the power of Jesus’ name. We must believe that Jesus came to take our sins and bear our diseases. Jesus said, “*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners*.” (Mk 2:17) “*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*.” (Jn 1:8-9) I pray that we all may experience Jesus’ touching and healing while studying Matthew’s gospel. Amen!