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“J. C., The Healer”

Matthew 8:1-18

September 21, 2003

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Last year we began preaching through Matthew but took a break for the summer. This weekend we're picking up where we left off, Matthew 8. Jesus has just finished the Sermon on the Mount, and immediately Matthew relays three healing stories, part of ten miracles.

All summer I've been thinking about this. A few months ago Session even prayed that we as a church would see more healings.

- I've pictured hurting believers driving up the mountain to be healed.
- I've dreamed of what a testimony that would be. Think of the crowd it would draw!
- Think of the validation it would be! Who would criticize a genuine healer? If you healed people, who would want to hurt you?

Well, of course there are objections to a healing ministry. Some theologians argue that it invalidates suffering. And most people don't trust Christian healing ministries. In fact, this is the way Hollywood pictures them:

[Movie Clip: Fletch Lives]

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen . . . boys and girls . . . It's time for the 4,323rd Television Ministry. *Audience applauding. Fletch finds his seat. The regular cast marches out with a wave to the cameras and audience.*

ANNOUNCER: With Mimsy Carlyle . . . Damon Feather . . . The Bradley Family Singers . . . and Dick Medly and the Band. I'm Al Crank . . . and now - (drum roll) - the host of our show . . . the Ministry's founder and your friend . . . Mr. Good News himself .

. . .
the Reverend Jimmy Lee Farnsworth. . . .

JIMMY LEE (who wears a small earphone): I know there's someone out there tonight who needs to step forward . . . Is there a Lyda Pearl Shindley? Lyda Perl are you with us? *Lyda Perl shoots up from her seat screaming.*

LYDA PERL: Me, me??

JIMMY LEE: Come on down!

Lyda Perl arrives on stage.

JIMMY LEE: Lyda Perl, I know you've suffered a great tragedy when you lost Joe Bob in the Merry Go Round accident at the State Fair.

LYDA PERL: I did.

JIMMY LEE: Even though Joe Bob left you well protected, these riches haven't brought you happiness.

LYDA PERL: No, they haven't. I've sinned.

JIMMY LEE: We've all sinned. Bless you, child.

LYDA PERL: But I've really sinned. (Whispers in his ear)

JIMMY LEE: Say it aloud. Cleanse yourself.

LYDA PERL (looking uncomfortable): I'm so ashamed. I slept with my best friend's husband.

JIMMY LEE: Bless you child.

CONGREGATION (responding to a flashing red "Amen" light): Amen.

LYDA PERL: And I also slept with my Uncle James.

JIMMY LEE: Bless you child, you are forgiven.

CONGREGATION: Amen.

JIMMY LEE: Ladies and gentlemen, doesn't this take courage to come up on nationwide TV to confess your human frailty? Al, would you . . .

LYDA PERL: I shoplifted this blouse from Sheerie's Petite Shoppe . . .

JIMMY LEE: God forgives you.

CONGREGATION: Amen.

LYDA PERL: And I . . .

Jimmy Lee grabs Lyda Perl's head in his hands.

JIMMY LEE: Demons out!

Lyda Perl swoons. Two attendants rush the stage to carry Lyda Perl off.

You didn't know whether to laugh or not . . .

I was a youth pastor when that movie came out. All the kids loved it, and I didn't know what to say. In the movie, Jimmy Lee has a transmitter in his ear. Recently, a famous faith healer was found with a transmitter in *his* ear. He had tried to heal a mailman in drag, claiming a word of knowledge. He tried to heal him of uterine cancer.

But more than that similarity to a known fraud, Jimmy Lee and his ministry looked so much like standard Christian TV. They really didn't even need actors for that part of the movie.

So I didn't know what to say to the kids in the youth group. Yet I knew, and I know, that Jesus heals. I've seen Him drive out demons. I've been "slain in the Spirit." I have documented testimonies of healings from doctors and people I love. But more than other's testimonies, I've been healed, and I felt it.

- Years ago my leg grew at a healing service. It sounds entirely hokey, but I felt it grow. In fact, I jumped up and thought it grew too far.
- Late one night, my father fell down the stairs at our home. He was in so much pain he couldn't scream. So *I* screamed. I screamed, "God, help him!" And immediately he was okay.

- Last year, having prayed with my friend for years, and having witnessed God's incredible power over the demonic, my friend who was HIV positive is no longer HIV positive.

I know Jesus heals . . . but I really get frustrated with Him, that . . .

- He doesn't do it more often.
- He doesn't heal the right things (I didn't really even *care* about my leg!).
- He doesn't heal the right things, at the right times, in the right places.

You know, in the last twenty years, it seems that society's belief in miraculous healings has increased. People believe in healings, just not in church.

Anyway, I've asked, "How come we don't see more healings?" I've dreamed of Christians driving up the mountain to be healed. I've dreamed of a healing ministry. Now let's look at Jesus' healing ministry . . .

Matthew 8:1:

When he came down from the mountain . . .

These healings don't happen on the mountain. They happen in the valley.

. . . great crowds followed him; and behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to the people."

In that day, a leper was literally as good as dead, sentenced to death row, a walking prison. Everywhere a leper went, he was required to yell, "Unclean! Unclean!" for it was illegal to come closer than four cubits (six feet) to him, or 150 feet if the wind was blowing. Lepers weren't even allowed within the walls of Jerusalem, let alone the temple. The only thing more unclean was a corpse. And these regulations weren't only safety regulations but *moral* regulations. For the Jews knew that disease was somehow connected to sin.

Well, this leper comes, kneels, and worships at Jesus' feet. He doesn't demand; he doesn't "name it and claim it"; he doesn't even ask. He simply says, "If you will, you can make me clean." Jesus wills. Jesus cleanses him, and Jesus touches him. (He didn't have to). Then Jesus says, "Tell no one."

That's just the opposite of what I'd say. I'd make flyers, pass them out . . . help the church budget . . . but Jesus says, "Tell no none, but present yourself to the priest as testimony and proof."

Jesus doesn't say, "You're healed even if there's no evidence." Jesus doesn't say, "If you had faith, you wouldn't go to the doctor and have it checked out." He says, "Go to the authorities and

have it checked out” (according to Leviticus 14:1-9). And then “offer the gift”—make the sacrifice (Leviticus 14:10-20).

Now, this is fascinating: This healing wasn’t without cost. There was a price to be paid, an atonement. A lamb was to be sacrificed, its blood smeared on the ex-leper’s body.

Next verse . . .

As he entered Caperna-um, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress.”

You’ll remember, a centurion was a Roman military officer commanding one hundred soldiers. Israel was an occupied country. Jesus was like a prisoner; the centurion was the prison guard. (It was a centurion who executed Jesus.) According to Luke, the paralyzed servant is the centurion’s slave. Slaves were property in the Roman Empire . . . like black people were property in the United States. Gentiles like these were hated and only allowed into the outer courts of the temple. A centurion swore a pagan oath just to get his job.

And Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” But the centurion answered him, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.” And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; be it done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Jesus marveled at this centurion’s faith. In many places in the gospels, people marvel at Jesus’ faith. In Mark, Jesus marvels at the lack of faith in His hometown in Israel. This is the only place Jesus marvels at the presence of faith . . . and it’s in a bloody, pagan centurion.

To make it worse, He then refers to the Jews’ greatest hope (the Messianic banquet) saying, “Many will come from the east and the west, while the sons of the kingdom [i.e., folks like us] will be thrown into outer darkness.”

Dale Brunner points out that Jesus only preached on Hell to people who thought they were “heirs of the kingdom.” But He didn’t preach on Hell to pagans. Perhaps they already knew about it. Next verse . . .

And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and served him. That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits

with a word, and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.” Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side.

This is weird. Jesus seems to refuse to draw a crowd with His healings. He intentionally draws a crowd for His teaching, and

He intentionally draws a crowd for one other thing. But He won't draw a crowd for healings.

Toward the end of Matthew's gospel, Pharisees come to Jesus demanding a sign. (I guess they hadn't seen any of these signs.) Jesus says they'll only get one sign. (I think that's the other thing Jesus intentionally drew a crowd for.) But they wouldn't see or read any of *these* signs—our Lord's signs—because they were in the wrong place, to the wrong people, in the wrong way . . . not in the church with the crowd on the mountain, but down in the valley with the wrong folks.

1. First, Jesus heals a leper. That would be like kissing a flamboyant homosexual dying of AIDS in a prison cell.
2. Then He heals the slave of a centurion, admiring the centurion's faith. That would be like admiring the faith of a Taliban prison guard.
3. Then He heals Peter's mother-in-law. That would be like healing . . . your mother-in-law.

I have a great mother-in-law, but do you see what Jesus is doing? He heals the outcast; He heals the enemy; He heals the people that bug you in your own home. He's walking into the temple:

1. Past the outer walls and the lepers and the untouchables.
2. Past the court of the Gentiles and the centurion and your enemies.
3. Past the court of the women—the people who bug you in your home.

He's headed for the Holy of Holies. He's gonna mess with your heart.

If you'd like to see more miracles of healing, and you think Jesus offers some formula or pattern (which I'm not sure He does — every one of these miracles follows a very different pattern) . . . if there is some type of pattern or instruction, maybe you ought to ask your heart:

- When was the last time I touched a leper?
- When was the last time I admired the faith of my sworn enemy?
- When was the last time I genuinely pursued my mother-in-law in love?
- When was the last time I left the mountain and went to the valley . . . went to the slums, the alleys . . . on purpose to touch the unclean with love?

Do you ever feel like Jesus has a different agenda than us, His Church? In fact, Matthew just told us what His agenda was: “This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, ‘He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.’” That’s His agenda.

One of the very best books I’ve ever read was What’s So Amazing About Grace by Philip Yancey. In it, Philip has this great chapter on the Levitical laws regarding contagion and uncleanness, and how Jesus almost goes out of His way to break them, touching corpses, lepers, Gentiles, slaves, and women. He goes *to* them, touches them, and brings them into the Holy of Holies. Or He takes the Holy of Holies to them, making *them* holy.

Philip writes:

Levitical laws guarded against contagion. Contact with a sick person, a Gentile, [or] a corpse . . . would contaminate a person. Jesus reversed the process: rather than becoming contaminated, he made the other person whole. . . . The pitiful woman with the flow of blood did not shame Jesus and make him unclean; she went away whole. The twelve-year-old dead girl did not contaminate Jesus; she was resurrected.

That is *so true*, yet according to Isaiah, not *all* the truth. That is: Jesus reversed the flow, but He *was* contaminated.

- The woman was healed, but Jesus became unclean.
- The little girl was resurrected, but Jesus died.
- The leper was healed, but Jesus contracted leprosy.
- The slave was healed, but Jesus contracted slavery and paganism.
- The mother-in-law was healed, but Jesus bore her fever.
- *You*, sinner, are forgiven, but Jesus became sin for you (II Corinthians 5:21).

Peter writes, “He committed no sin, [yet] He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.” Matthew writes, “This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah,” and then he quotes Isaiah 53:

He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows [or as Matthew translates it from Hebrew, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases”]; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes [scars] we are healed.

When the leper was healed, a lamb was slain.

When the centurion’s slave was healed, a lamb was slain.

When the fever left her, a lamb was slain.

When my silly leg grew, a Lamb was slain.
When you come to this table in faith, a Lamb is slain.

According to Isaiah, Jesus was like a sponge. He didn't just *get* contaminated; He purposely soaked up all the contamination to make you clean. And He didn't just soak up sickness, but also sin.

Faith healers sometimes blame sickness on sin, and they don't know how right they are. Theologically, all disease is like a symptom of the real disease: sin. And we've all sinned such that we'll all die or are dead. So every disease is a sign . . . not that *that* particular person sinned in some particular way, but that all the race of Adam is dead, dying, under a curse, and infected with sin.

According to Isaiah and Matthew, Jesus bears it all on His cross. That was His agenda: to bear every cough, sneeze, and sin. I'm not sure how He disposes of the contamination. Perhaps God destroys it in Hell. Perhaps in some sense Jesus still bears it. He's *not* sin, but He still bears the scars of our sin.

In a vision, He showed my friend that her scars were His scars on His body. And when she gave Him her sorrow, He told her He would hold it forever. He keeps our tears in a bottle. I think they're like a treasure.

In 1373, Julian of Norwich had a vision of Jesus suffering on His cross as He absorbed our sin, sorrows, and shame. As she watched Him, He stopped and said, "Are you pleased that I have suffered this way for you?" And she said, "Yes, Lord. I am pleased. And may you be blessed." He said, "If you are pleased, I am pleased. It is a joy and a delight and an endless happiness to me that I ever endured suffering for you, for if I could suffer more, I would suffer."

We sing: "I'm trading my sorrows, I'm trading my shame, I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord."

What does that mean?
Whose joy?
What kind of joy?

Well, I don't know exactly what He does with all that contamination and suffering, but "He bore our diseases, He was wounded for our transgressions, and with His stripes [His scars] we are healed."

When you see that, healing is no longer a magic trick. It's a story—*the* story—of supreme love that kills you and recreates you . . . or it judges you. The Pharisees said, "Show us a sign," but they wouldn't be caught dead next to one of Jesus' signs.

Jesus "took our infirmities and bore our diseases." It's not just that Jesus wasn't to touch lepers and corpses because they were unclean, but having touched them, according to the law, *He* became unclean . . . like a scapegoat or lamb that needs to be slaughtered in the temple.

Would you let Him touch you?

It's not just being willing to touch leper Gentile slave women, but . . .

Are you willing to let leper Gentile slave women touch you?

Are you willing to be healed by someone who touches lepers and Gentiles? The Pharisees were *not*.

Are you willing to be nursed by a Samaritan? Jesus *is* the Samaritan; the slave; the outcast; the dying, naked man cursed on a cross. "He healed others," they cried. "Let Him heal Himself." But He would not.

It was His agenda to bear our curse.

Gosh . . . His healing ministry seems so different from my dream and from TV. It reminds me of a movie . . . it's about a black prisoner on death row. He was sentenced to death for a crime he didn't commit. On death row, he heals one of the guards (like a centurion) of a bladder infection by "taking it back," he says. He absorbs it into himself, feeling the pain, and later releasing it as flies swarm out of his mouth. (In the Bible, flies are a symbol for evil.)

Well, eventually the guards sneak this prisoner out of the prison late one night so that John Coffey (J. C., like Jesus Christ, only spelled differently) would heal the warden's wife of a brain tumor. At first, the warden's wife curses him and won't let him touch her, but he refuses to not help. In this scene, she says, "Why do you have so many scars? Who hurt you so badly?" He replies, "I don't hardly remember, ma'am." Then he helps her.

[Movie Clip The Green Mile]:

MELINDA: Why do you have so many scars? Who hurt you so badly?

COFFEY: Don't hardly remember, ma'am.

Tears are forming in Melinda's eyes.

MELINDA: What's your name?

COFFEY: John Coffey, ma'am. Like the drink, only not spelt the same.

COFFEY: Ma'am?

MELINDA: Yes, John Coffey?

COFFEY: I see it. I see it. You be still now. You be so quiet and so still.

Melinda weeps. Coffey brushes her forehead with his lips . . . then moves his mouth down to hers. He begins inhaling the air deeply from her lungs. Something hot and glowing starts passing between them, drawn on his breath. The men watch. In the downstairs parlor the grandfather clock stops ticking, the pendulum stopping dead, the glass face cracking neatly up the center. Coffey keeps inhaling. Then Coffey raises his head, revealing Melinda's beautiful face. Her mouth no longer droops. Color is coming back to her hair. Her skin is shining with life. Coffey regards her raptly for a moment or two, then starts coughing violently. He turns away and drops to his knees, hacking.

BRUTAL: John! Sick it up! Cough 'em out like you done before!

Coffey keeps retching.

BRUTAL: He's choking! Whatever he sucked out of her, he's choking on it!

Which movie clip reminded you more of Jesus?

Which movie clip reminded you more of us?

Next in the movie, there is a confusing scene that is a remarkable picture of, perhaps, judgment upon a Pharisee and a licentious pagan, who want the evil that John Coffey absorbs. They take it and destroy themselves.

At the end, John Coffey, the healer who healed others and raised the dead, is executed in a room that looks like a church. The electric chair is right in the middle, up front, where our cross is. The guard he heals must give the order to have him killed, like the centurion at the cross. That guard is also the first to believe, and he's "infected with life."

I don't think the author meant to portray Jesus as much as what someone might look like who really believed in Jesus. In the book, Big John Coffey prays a prayer: "Baby Jesus, meek and mild, pray for me an orphan child. Be my strength, be my friend, be with me until the end."

The author of The Green Mile is Stephen King. Does that bother you? Maybe you should marvel and say, "Not even in church have I found such faith. Many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness . . ." Maybe Stephen King has a better picture of J. C. because he's been to the valley, longed for a savior, and read his Bible away from American Christian TV and me. (Maybe . . . maybe not.)

Well, Matthew writes, "This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.'" What is "this"? — the "this" that happened to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy? Is it just the healings? You can't have healings without something to heal. Is it just the healings or also the infirmities and diseases?

In John 9, the disciples ask Jesus about a blind man, saying, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" Jesus says, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." Then Jesus heals him.

Jesus has an agenda: to make manifest the work of God; to bear our sins, bear our infirmities, and bear our diseases. He does it all through His cross. The gospels record that when Jesus healed, power came out of Him. Isaiah reveals that sickness, sin, and death went into Him. If you're worried about surrendering your sickness, sin, and death, according to Isaiah He already has your scars; He has already born your diseases and sins.

Even the sins you have not yet committed.

Even the disease or wound that will one day kill you.

Every cough, sneeze, sorrow, and pain.

You experience them here in time. He bears them there on His cross where your time touches eternity. Whenever you are healed, it's a taste of what God does in Christ Jesus for all time, and for all things.

C. S. Lewis wrote, "The miracles in fact are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see." That story is the Gospel of God's sacrificial love in Christ Jesus.

Healing miracles reveal God's sovereignty over all disease. Therefore, healing miracles are a sign that God has given us His Spirit and will give us new bodies. And they are a sign that if you suffer, it is not accident. It's a gift with a purpose. When you suffer, you are feeling and tasting what Christ forever takes from you at His cross.

Christ's healings give meaning to all my sufferings. They are not accident but a gift. In suffering, I commune with Jesus on His cross. So He is not alone. Sufferings and healings both reveal that God in Christ Jesus has freely "born our griefs and carried our sorrows." They reveal the true miracle; they reveal the heart of God. That's Christ's agenda.

Have you ever loved somebody so much and so wanted them to know your love that you actually wanted to suffer for them? Would God ever love us that much? And how would He accomplish the knowledge of His love?

So Jesus heals some folks in Matthew 8 and then flees from the crowd. At the end of Matthew, Jesus intentionally draws His biggest crowd. He goes to Jerusalem when it's packed with pilgrims for the Passover. He does it so that they can all see . . .

the healer die,
the Lamb slain,
J. C. crucified.

That's His agenda. His agenda is that we might see:

- He not only heals us of diseases (so would shamans, witch doctors, medical doctors, and your mom) . . .
- He not only heals us of diseases, He's more than just the best healer in town . . .
- He not only heals us of diseases, He bears our diseases on the tree. For love of you, He bears Hell on the tree.

So "this" (the hellish, fallen world; these sicknesses; these healings; this cross) was all to fulfill what was spoken by Isaiah: "He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . and with his stripes [his wounds, his scars] we are healed."

And this is the judgment:

Would you like Him to touch you?

So on the night He was betrayed, having given thanks, He took the bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way after the supper, He took the cup and said, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me. And I tell you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I drink it with you new in my Father’s kingdom.”

If you come for communion, you are saying, “Lord Jesus, I want you to touch me. I surrender me to you. Heal me.” And He has.

If you’re sick, if you’re wounded, or if you’re hurt, and you pray, “Oh God, heal me!” and He heals your body, that’s exactly what Jesus said it is: a sign.

When my dad was suddenly healed at the bottom of the stairs, it was a sign. His body has gotten awfully old since then. But it was sign saying, “Dan, one day I’m going to give you new lungs, a new heart, new eyes, and a new body, and we will dance with joy forevermore.”

But let me tell you something even more amazing. If you pray and say, “Oh God, heal me!” and you look at your body, and it’s still broken, then you need to believe the Gospel. You’ve given Him your suffering, your hurt, and your pain. So it’s not a punishment but a *gift*. And He’s saying to you, “You share in my sufferings.”

Well, Jesus *is* the one who took our disease and bears our iniquity. Jesus is the sponge. He absorbs the contamination; *you* do not. But as His people, you are called to use Him—the Sponge—on behalf of others. But using Him, you must trust Him, go where He goes, and love who He loves.

In the third century in North Africa, the city of Carthage was ravaged by plague. The Bishop Cyprian called on the best, young, Christian men and women to care for the sick. But still thousands died.

These young Christians were so grieved watching the citizens of Carthage die without knowing the love of Christ, that they formed a group named the Parabolani. (It means those who drew near and went with.) They would go to the plague victims, and (like John Coffey) they would put their mouths over the suppurating sores of the plague victims and suck out the plague in the name of Jesus.

They died by the score, contaminated by plague. But Carthage became contaminated with life. Carthage would never be the same again.

Well, that’s a healing ministry that reminds me of our Lord’s healing ministry. And when I think about that, I have to admit . . . part of me *doesn’t* want a healing ministry at all. That part of me is my flesh. Yet a part of me wants a healing ministry more than ever! That part of me is *His Spirit*.

May you be filled with His Spirit. May you love as He loves us. And may you believe the Gospel. That's His agenda.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Further Reading

The LORD said to Moses, “This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest; and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall make an examination. . . . And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish, and a cereal offering of three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, and one log of oil. And the priest who cleanses him shall set the man who is to be cleansed and these things before the LORD, at the door of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall take one of the male lambs, and offer it for a guilt offering, along with the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before the LORD; and he shall kill the lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the holy place; for the guilt offering, like the sin offering, belongs to the priest; it is most holy. . . . The priest shall offer the sin offering, to make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. And afterward he shall kill the burnt offering; and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the cereal offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.”

Leviticus 14:1-3a, 10-13, 19-20

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53

He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

I Peter 2:22-25

There is an activity of God displayed throughout creation, a wholesale activity let us say which men refuse to recognize. The miracles done by God incarnate, living as a man in Palestine, perform the very same things as this wholesale activity, but at a different speed and on a smaller scale. One of their chief purposes is that men, having seen a thing done by personal power on the small scale, may recognize, when they see the same thing done on the large scale, that the power behind it is also personal – is indeed the very same person who lived among us two thousand years ago. The miracles in fact are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see.

C. S. Lewis, God in the Dock

And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came forth from him and healed them all.

Luke 6:19

Without our suffering, our work would just be social work, very good and helpful, but it would not be the work of Jesus Christ, not part of the Redemption. Jesus wanted to help by sharing our life, our loneliness, our agony, our death. Only by being one with us has he redeemed us.

Mother Teresa, Something Beautiful for God

God has a different definition of peace and safety than we do To be wounded in the fight is a great honor. It is by the Lord's stripes that we are healed, and it is through our stripes that we, too, are given the authority for healing. Once we are healed, we are given the power to heal others in the very place where the enemy wounded us. Healing was a basic part of the Lord's ministry, and it is also a basic part of ours. One reason why the Lord allows bad things to happen to His people is so they can receive compassion for others, by which the power of healing operates. That is why the apostle Paul told of his beatings and stonings when his authority was questioned. Every wound and other bad thing that happens to us can be turned into the authority to do good. Every beating that the great apostle took resulted in salvation for others. Every wound that a warrior receives will result in others being saved, healed or restored.

Rick Joyner, The Final Quest

Baby Jesus, meek and mild, pray for me an orphan child. Be my strength, be my friend, be with me until the end.

John Coffey, The Green Mile (the book)

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