

2nd May 2021 10 am Healing and Refreshing

Service led by Lindsey Attwood, Talk by Andrew Attwood.

This transcript is only of the reading and the talk. One of the whole service is available.

Reading: John 5:1-9a [NIVUK 1984] The Healing at the Pool

1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralysed. 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

7 “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

8 Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” 9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

Talk

[Lindsey:]

I'm going to pray for Andrew now as he comes to you to share God's Word.

Father God, I want to thank You for Andrew and his desire so much to see You work in people's lives. And we pray now, Lord, that You bless His words, and that You speak to us through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

[Andrew:]

Thank you Lindsey. Good morning all. Good to see you today. And as Lindsey has already said, the focus of today is healing, an opportunity to be refreshed.

Just to set this in the context of the last, say, two weeks and today, these three weeks in particular have been trying to bring a little bit of consolidation or even closure, if you like, to this strange 12 to 15 to 18 months that we've all been through. I wonder what kinds of thoughts come to mind as soon as I reflect back on how lockdown has been for you. Kim very movingly talked about lament a couple of weeks ago: the struggle of loss, the struggle of losing in all kinds of different ways, and then we had last time with Jane talking about an attitude of thanksgiving through difficulty, but also good things, unexpected things that have come out of this particular period.

I just wanted to share with you something that my daughter Emily got me for my birthday, which kind of captures something of how I feel about lockdown generally. This is a birthday card that she got me, and it says, "News! I went out for a bit and then I came back." I went out for a bit and then I came back, that's kind of a common feeling really, of how things have been where everything was reduced down to such basic issues, isn't it?



Anyway, in the light of all of those experiences, be it lament or thanksgiving or just a bland nothingness when we're waiting for things to change, today we want to focus on Jesus as our healer. The irony today of me talking about Jesus as our healer is that I've had a really bad neck and shoulder for the last, say, eight, nine days. It seems kind of like strange, even ludicrous, that I'm here talking about Jesus being our healer, when I've experienced what seems to have been quite significant pain over these last few days. But we all need to come to Jesus, in

some measure, for repair. My guess is that quite a lot of us are confident in coming to Jesus as Saviour, someone who's going to forgive us. A lot of us are probably quite competent in coming to Jesus for counsel, for a bit of wisdom or peace, but how readily and how frequently and how confidently do we come to Him as our healer?

When I think back to my last week, I was crying out to Jesus for healing. It got to Thursday this last week and I had blinding pain back and forth all the way down here, and ended up having to cancel a meeting or two. I was remembering a friend of mine who talks about healing ministry and helping us to gauge how bad it is. And I was given that a kind of a 9 out of 10 pain experience, it was horrible. So on that Thursday I kind of just put out a little request for prayer from Christian friends (and other requests). And on Friday then, "Please keep praying." And on Saturday, I think I scored my pain at a 5. It had changed. And today, it's still there but I'll put it as a 3 compared to where I was, so I've experienced – it might be natural, it might be an intervention from God – some measure of progress. I wanted to give you an opportunity, then, to focus on the high impact of Jesus' healing ministry, so that you can perhaps raise a bit of your own faith in Him, to seek some help at this time. It may be that part of what's happened over these months has been a general sense of being debilitated by it, or it may be that there are particular sicknesses or illnesses, something that has kind of hemmed you in, that you really do need releasing from.

Let me give you a bit of an overview. If you were to do a review of the gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry, you will find particular words that keep cropping up. There's a Greek word called *asthenia*¹ [ἀσθένεια], which means every kind of sickness, *asthenia*, and this word crops up quite frequently when Jesus is describing, or rather when the authors are describing the kind of healing that Jesus did, and it's describing basically every kind of sickness, it's a general term, *asthenia*. And then it talks about *malakia*² [μαλακία] which are debilitating illnesses that Jesus healed, things that would kind of inhibit life, that would hold you down: it could be that you can't walk straight or you've got a kind of respiratory problem. In Matthew, there's one particular phrase that comes up: it's 'lunatic'³ – of unsound mind, where there's something at a mental level that Jesus heals; or even later on in Matthew⁴ *paralutikous* [παραλυτικούς], which has to do with being lame or paralysed. And these words, all the way through the Gospel accounts, indicate a broad range of what Jesus attended to. He didn't just heal one kind of thing, He healed every known kind of sickness. It's also recorded in the gospels that when the people came to Him in crowds, all came and He healed often all of them. If you were to do a rough calculation you could say that literally thousands of people in various villages and cities were touched. Some people have even calculated that if Jesus visited a local village, the actual health and welfare of that village would have gone up, because people would be able to get back to work and get back to living properly.

And here's the point of mentioning all of this. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever." Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. So the healing ministry of Jesus has not ended. He hasn't changed.

Think about the kinds of things that are recorded again and again in the accounts. Luke 5 verse 15 says this⁵:

1 e.g. in John 5:5. More often found in the plural, 'sicknesses', *asthenias* (ἀσθενείας), e.g. Acts 28:9.

2 In Matthew 4:23 – meaning weakness/softness/disease. In the 3 occurrences of this word in Matthew, you'll find it in the genitive case, *malakian* (μαλακίαν), 'of disease'

3 Ancient Greek for lunatic is *seléniazomenous* (σεληνιαζομένους), used e.g. in Matthew 4:24 [KJV] (one being moon-struck, lunar influenced – people believed that the moon caused these mental issues.). The ancient Greeks called the moon *seléné* (σελήνη)

4 In Matthew 4:24 – here meaning 'paralytics'. The original word is *paralutikos* (παραλυτικός), the adjective 'paralytic'

15 But the news about Him was spreading *even* farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear *Him* and to be healed of their sicknesses.

This was a key feature of Jesus' activity when He was doing His public ministry.

Let me mention another Greek word before I get to the passage that Lindsey mentioned. There's another Greek word called *therapeuso*⁶ [θεραπεύσω], which is the word in the gospels most frequently used for healing, or to heal, and it's used almost 95% of the time when Jesus does something with someone who needs to be repaired. You could just count them endlessly with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, *therapeuso*, and it's where we get our word therapy from. The emphasis of this particular word is that Jesus often, not always but often, involved the person He was dealing with in some way to do something as part of their healing. That classic example of the person with a withered hand, and Jesus said, "Stretch out your hand." In other words, they were engaged in what was happening. *Therapeuso* means Jesus doesn't just remotely make things happen. He's usually attentive to the person themselves and gets them to enter into it, like the woman who reached out and touched the hem of His garment: she did something, and it helped the healing to flow.

Final statistic before I get to the passage: it has been calculated that if you were to add up all the verses in all four gospels together, and calculate how much emphasis was on healing or healing-related issues, 66% of the gospels are to do with healing. 66%! I've still got a reminder on my phone when it comes to every other Sunday, and it says, "66%," to remind me that is a key emphasis of Jesus' ministry.

Another just precursor to the story. Can you remember when Jairus came to plead with Jesus for his daughter? In Mark 5:23 it says Jairus begs and pleads with Jesus on his knees, and he's in front of a crowd. This was a man of high status. He was well known in the crowd. The crowd opened up so he could move through. And he's saying, "Come and save my daughter!" He's earnest about his desire for Jesus to do something. And we can see, like in this occasion and in others, Jesus is responsive to straightforward, earnest requests for healing.

So I would want to encourage everybody this morning, whatever you're carrying, whatever it is that's hurting you, whatever you're weighed down by, straightforward earnest request is something that Jesus appears to respond to. So how can I help raise your faith this morning? How can I help encourage you to come to Jesus as healer? He says in Romans 10 verse 17,

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Faith comes when you start to hear about Him. So I want to encourage you to hear again this story of Jesus in John 5:1-8, where He deals with a man who has been laying by the pool for so long. In verse 2, it talks about the place where Jesus goes to, where this man was, called Bethesda. Bethesda is a local nickname, perhaps a nickname given by the sick people who were there, which means 'house of mercy'. It was probably quite a fancy place that had these colonnades, that used to be probably for people who were privileged, but at some point in history, the local sick had taken it over; perhaps the pool was abandoned for some reason, and the sick had decided to make it their own. And it had become a place where they sought mercy from God. There was this... was it a myth or was it true? There was this idea of the water being stirred and people would go into the water and something would happen. You see, in verse 3, it talks about people being gathered in this place, sick people, and it almost gives an emphasis of them in... stacked together, packed in, all together because they were all in

5 [NASB]

6 In this form it means 'I will heal' (future). The original word is *therapeuo* (θεραπεύω) 'I heal'. Also in Matthew 10:1 you have *therapeuein* (θεραπεύειν) 'to heal'

such need of a miracle, and their eyes were all fixed on the water, waiting for something to happen. So we hear in this particular story, in verse 5, that a certain man was there. Whenever it says 'a certain man' in the Gospel accounts, it's usually someone known at the time of writing, you could probably go and find this person, if you wanted to, at the time of this account being written. And this person was a fixture in this place. Yeah? John 5 talks about this man being there for how long? 38 years! 38 years. So this is a chronic condition.

This is partly why I wanted to choose this account, I mean, let's face it, there's loads, choose this particular account of Jesus' healing ministry, because the whole nation, our whole nation has had an extended period of time of waiting and struggling and even suffering. And so the idea of something ongoing for a long period of time seemed to resonate with me: a person who was in a chronic condition for a long time: he was stuck, and he'd been stuck there literally for years.

And so then you have this provocative question from Jesus that we hear through the centuries being asked of us: "Do you want to get well?" Jesus said to him, "Do you want to get well?" Think about it for this man. He had been there for 38 years. Granted, no fault, it was his sickness, he had no kind of reason to be blamed for that. But if you're in one place for 38 years, you would have had to fall into a way of life that was passive, with minimal responsibilities. It's possible that his sickness had become part of his identity. That doesn't necessarily explain though his appetite still to seek help. He replies to Jesus, in verse 7,

'Sir,' the invalid replied, 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.'

This man had no help. He had no friend. He had no support. He was unable to fix himself. He was unable to sort his own problem out. I don't know how that resonates with you, how independent of spirit are you. Have you ever struggled with something, and got to the end, where you think, "I can't do this. I can't fix myself, I can't sort it." I felt like that with regards to my shoulder. I didn't know what to do. And I was very frustrated by my need to actually ask for help. But this man had no help. This man had no one to turn to. And yet in this particular moment, Jesus was the one standing right beside him. Jesus doesn't enter into further conversation with this man. He doesn't have a long diagnosis with this man, He doesn't tease out what the pros and cons are, what the what the different symptoms are. Jesus simply speaks a word of command to this man. And in verses 8 and 9 He says this:

'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.'

Get up, pick up your mat, and walk. And it says,

At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

There's that *therapeuso* emphasis of healing, where the man had to do something in response to Jesus' command. He engaged with what was being said and healing power flows.

How did that work? What was going on? I don't want to engage today in the complexities of why healing happens or not at times. I simply want to focus today on Jesus being the source of healing again and again and again throughout the Gospel accounts. Jesus Himself is a source of healing. Jesus' words are a source of power that unlocks healing. And something changes in the real world when Jesus speaks.

How do you feel about that? Do you find doubts rising in your head? Do you question whether this is possible? I think some of this is down to expectation. Let me give you a very practical parallel example to see how you would respond in this need. Just imagine that we're in the middle of winter, and your house

boiler breaks down: the boiler that gives you your hot water and keeps your radiators nice and warm. Inevitably, within a matter of hours, if your boiler isn't working, you'll get in touch with your provider and arrange for someone to come and sort that, if you're able to afford that, that is. What would happen - just have a think about this - imagine the engineer knocking on your door, and coming in to attend to your need. Now just imagine if the engineer brought his toolbox in and sat down, and you made him a cup of tea and you sat together and you spent 30 minutes talking, and he spends all of his time simply asking how you **felt** about having a broken boiler, and he asks you leading questions like, "So, how has this made you feel? How have you been coping in the cold?" because clearly the house is cold. "That must be really hard." And the engineer encourages you and says, "Well, you know, I'm really sorry to hear that but you know it's good that we've talked about it." And then he stands up and plans to leave. How would you feel? My guess is, at some point in that conversation you'd say, "Don't leave! You're here to fix my boiler!" You're here to fix my boiler. Something actual is needed to be repaired. I want to put it to you (and I'm hearing it myself) that we need to come to Jesus to fix what needs to be fixed. We know He is a wonderful counsellor. We know He is a great saviour, forgiver of sins, but He's also a great healer. Remember what I said: 66% of the gospels are healing stories. To come to Jesus and to seek His healing is not awkward or strange for Him to hear. This is mostly what Jesus heard from most people during His ministry. "Help me, heal me." "Jesus, help me, heal me!"

So I wonder where you are this morning. We're going to play another song in a moment and then we're going to have an opportunity to receive healing prayer, and some soaking time, even if you don't have a particular illness. We're going to hear a song in a moment but what I want you to do during this song is to get your head and heart straight as to what you need Jesus to do. What is it that you need His help with?

Song: Living Waters

[omitted from this transcript]

Response / Application: Healing time

[Andrew:]

Okay, let's just be still and let's pray. Just a moment of quiet as we come to Jesus our healer.

Just in this place of stillness, it may be that you have a particular need. It may be that you simply don't have that, but you're just weary from everything that's happened in the last few months. We're going to begin with prayers for actual healing though. This could be accelerated healing, perhaps like with my shoulder, accelerating recovery or miraculous healing where it's something that simply shouldn't logically happen. Jesus can do all kinds of healing, remember. So just in the quiet, I want you to name, in your heart or even out loud if you need to, what it is you need to bring to God. I'm bringing a painful neck and shoulder, and I'm naming that in the presence of Jesus, my healer.

I'd also like you to score it. How bad is it? 1 to 10. Is it 2 out of 10? Is it a 5 out of 10 problem that nags at you most of the time in the background? Is it a dominating thing that just stops you doing stuff, like 7 to 8 out of 10? Or is it terrible? Is it an 8 or 9 out of 10 problem? Tell Jesus, that this is a real need.

Okay, I'm going to invite God, by His Holy Spirit, to continue and release the healing ministry of Jesus now.

Holy Spirit, we can't do this. But You have poured out Yourself into the hearts and lives of believers. Jesus, we submit again to Your power and

authority, and ask that You would come now in this moment, to release healing.

Now for all those who don't feel like they have a particular need, I want to encourage you to remember that you are authorised now to join in with prayer for those who are sick, even though we can't see each other at the moment and even though some people may watch this later. I'm going to be praying words that are really simple, where I'm simply going to pray, "In the name of Jesus Christ, be healed." "In the name of Jesus Christ, be healed." And I'm going to encourage all of us, every single one of us to confidently speak that out, not just for ourselves but for all who may be watching, either live or later.

So, Holy Spirit, would You come and rest on Your people again and show us that we are authorised to speak words of healing in Jesus' name.
Come Holy Spirit.

Let's just wait.

So do feel free to join in with me. Speak out loud, and speak words of healing. And if you're on the receiving end, just wait and just receive and just maybe put your hand on what hurts, maybe, name it again and leave it with open hands before Jesus. Let's pray.

In the name of Jesus Christ, for all those who are physically sick in any kind of debilitating way from a named illness, in the name of Jesus Christ, receive healing.

So join in with me.

In the name of Jesus Christ, be healed.

All God's people join in together and speak words of healing over each other.

In the name of Jesus Christ, be healed.

Holy Spirit, let Your healing grace and power flow as it did when Jesus was with that man.

And if you wish, move whatever hurts; sense what is happening. Let's just wait for a moment of quiet, see what God is doing.
Come Holy Spirit.

Let's not rush this.

In the name of Jesus Christ, receive healing.

If you can, move what you need to move. Score it again. Is it as bad as it was?

Come Holy Spirit.

And I want to pray in the name of Jesus, for a breaking of influence of fatigue and long-term sickness over people who simply feel under the weather, or under par all the time. For those who are weary and heavy laden, in the name of Jesus Christ I break you free from those kinds of oppressive forces, in the name of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, I lift off you that kind of blanket of oppression that makes you under par all the time,

I want to pray for those who at different seasons of life go through changes, whether you're older, whether you're younger, if you're in

transition time and the physicality of it is just getting you down, in the name of Jesus Christ receive help and healing as you travel through change.

Like Jairus, bring your need to Jesus and cry out to Him as your healer.

In Jesus' name, for those who are suffering from joint problems, from bone problems, in the name of Jesus Christ, be set free. In the name of Jesus Christ.

For those who struggle with respiratory problems, in the name of Jesus Christ, breathe more freely.

Can I just wait briefly for the Spirit to come.

So just rest for a moment, give room to Jesus to do what He's doing.

And I want to flow into some soaking time. This can continue to be healing for those who need to receive healing. But can I just encourage everyone who's watching and listening, can you now get comfortable. Can you settle into your seats. Even if you need to, can you lie down if that's going to be helpful, it's going to be about four or five minutes of quiet music. There's some images on the screen but feel free to close your eyes and just soak in the restorative presence of God. Let me pray before the videos play.

Holy Spirit, we thank You that You want to mend and restore us, this is everybody. Would You breathe restoration and repair into our souls, and Holy Spirit, would You meet us exactly where we are. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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