

POWER TO HEAL

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, May 6, 2007

Gospel stories about Jesus still fascinate me! Listen to this one:

Matthew 8:1 Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. ² Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. “Lord,” the man said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.”

³ Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared.

I am moved with the *immediacy* of Jesus’ response: He reached out and touched him and said, “I am willing.”

Here, I learn something significant about the one we follow: He knows what He wants. He does not hesitate. He does not waffle. “I am willing.” His purpose is clear: He has come to heal and cleanse.

Also, He has *authority* to heal, He simply speaks a command — no incantations, no incense and candles, no ceremony or ritual, no hoopla; just a word — “Be healed!”

Matthew 8:5 When Jesus returned to Capernaum, a Roman officer came and pleaded with him, ⁶ “Lord, my young servant lies in bed, paralyzed and in terrible pain.”

⁷ Jesus said, “I will come and heal him.”

Again, He is clear and purposeful and ready: “I will come and heal him.”

⁸ But the officer said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.”

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, “I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel! ¹¹ And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. ¹² But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

¹³ Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, “Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened.” And the young servant was healed that same hour.

Have you ever wished you could say, as Jesus did, “I will come and heal him”? I have. Deeply. When I have read the exploits of such as Smith Wigglesworth and John Lake, it seemed they could say, “I will come and heal him.” Of course, that was untrue; I was reading into the stories something of my own imagination.

I dreamed... What would it take to have such faith and power? Prayer? Fasting? What would *you* be willing to give for it?

One Simon, formerly a magician, saw the power that flowed from the hands of the disciples, Peter and John, and he offered to pay them money to have the same power. If it really could be bought

with money, would you start saving? Would you sell your earthly possessions to own it? I would rather have such power than my cars, or my computers, or my cameras, or my savings? If only...

But this power is not for sale. It is free! It is free to be shared and used and given away, but it cannot be owned.

It is not my power, nor yours, nor can it ever be. It is *His* power.

If it were mine, I would surely abuse it. I would become so proud and arrogant. I could not help it. I would become lifted up in my own eyes. My self-image would be dangerously inflated. If it were mine, it would destroy me.

It is said that "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Of course, this is not really true, in fact or reality. In fact, no human being has ever had or will ever have absolute power — only God does, and He is not corrupt. In reality, it is not power that corrupts; we are corrupt before we ever have any power at all. It is sin that corrupts. Sin that has separated us from God, our Maker. Sin that has twisted our hearts and wills to serve ourselves instead of God, and to seek worship rather than offer it.

The only thing that can save us from abusing power is the clear understanding of authority — being under it, if we are ever to have it over others. Authority channels power and sets its boundaries. Authority limits its range and secures its appropriateness.

If I am not under someone else's authority, I am not fit to wield authority over anyone else (or to avoid the corrupt abuse of power). If I do not follow well, I am not fit to lead. Of course, there is room for mistakes, which are the primary tools of instruction in life, but my followership sets the level and governs the flow of God's power through my life.

Listen again to the words of the officer that Jesus praised with such surprise and delight: 'Just say the word from where You are and my servant will be healed. For I know how authority works.'

Jesus exclaimed, "I haven't seen faith like this in all of Israel!"

The officer was not confused about the *source* of power to heal — it all came from Jesus! He was also clear about *why* Jesus was that Source — as God's Son, He had authority over every aberration of human life and purpose.

Jesus said, "Because you believed, it has happened."

Now, tell me...

Who has power to heal human hurt and disease? (Jesus)

Is He inclined to heal those who come to Him? (Yes)

Matthew 8:14 When Jesus arrived at Peter's house, Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. ¹⁵ But when Jesus touched her hand, the fever left her. Then she got up and prepared a meal for him.

¹⁶ That evening many demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and he healed all the sick. ¹⁷ This fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, who said,
"He took our sicknesses

and removed our diseases.”

Let's read another story...

Matthew 17:14 At the foot of the mountain, a large crowd was waiting for them. A man came and knelt before Jesus and said,¹⁵ “Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.”¹⁶ So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't heal him.”

As if to underscore what I have said about the Holder of this power! It was not in them; it is not in you or me.

¹⁷ Jesus said, “You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.”¹⁸ Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him. From that moment the boy was well.

¹⁹ Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, “Why couldn't we cast out that demon?”

²⁰ “You don't have enough faith,” Jesus told them. “I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.”

Faith does not exist in a vacuum. You have faith in something or someone. Perhaps in yourself, perhaps in your prayer or in some other religious exercise. Perhaps in certain words, or a certain atmosphere, or a certain feeling or mood.

All of these things they had tried to create, yet Jesus called them “faithless and corrupt.” Considering what I have already shared, what do you suppose might have been the corruption He referred to? How could they try so hard, so sincerely, so many things, and yet be deemed “faithless”?

That father made a basic error: he brought his son to the *disciples* to be healed. They made an equally basic error: they tried to heal him. With a reproof, Jesus commanded, “Bring the boy here to *ME*.”

Who has power to heal human hurt and disease? (Jesus)

Is He inclined to heal those who come to Him? (Yes) Come to whom? (Jesus)

I have longed to be able to command sickness and disease to depart. I have wanted to be some “great one” in people's eyes. I have asked God to magnify in me in men's eyes, as He did for Moses. Huge difference. Moses was not unclear about whose the glory was or would be. He understood divine authority. He never longed to be seen, only to be used.

Do you want to be healed? Don't come to me; come to Jesus. I (and others) can play a role in your healing, if I will avoid getting in the way or standing in the place that belongs alone to Jesus Christ...and if you will avoid trying to put me there.

All we need is faith; “even as small as a mustard seed.” But faith in whom?

We don't need much faith, because He has so much power!

But misdirected faith halts even such power as God has. While we chant and sweat and shout and command... nothing flows, nothing happens except our exhaustion and the discouragement of those we so abuse.

Tonight, if you need healing from Almighty God, come... but come to Jesus. Come and stand here with us and look to Him. Wait for Him. Call upon Him. Present yourself to Him. No hype, no shenanigans, no mock faith. Just present yourself and ask Jesus to come and speak a word over you. Ask Jesus to act.

If you are coming to offer prayer for someone, submit yourself to the authority of Jesus. Don't try to be some big spiritual person, be a servant of Jesus Christ. Don't imagine that you have authority and power in yourself. What you have is an entrée to Jesus your Lord. You have a free pass to come and to bring a friend.

As you pray, bring them to Him. Hold them before Him. Stand at their side before Him. Wait with them for Him to act. Do not lose faith. Rigorously resist the unbelief inside of you. Believe in Him. Stand in faith. Listen for His voice. Listen for His command. Look for Him to act.

Let's get out of the way and see what Jesus will do!