
Jesus Healed

DAVE BAST

I once visited Mother Teresa's hospice for the dying in Calcutta. Nuns and volunteers there were tending to the most basic physical needs of the dying people who had been brought in to spend their final days in some measure of dignity and comfort and peace. How do these caregivers do it, I wondered? Where do they find the strength to serve in such a place, in such a way? The answer is quite simple: They were just doing what Jesus did, as we will see today on *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and we come now, Scott, to the final program—just a four-part series—dealing with Jesus' public ministry, which fills so much of the Gospels, really...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

How he went about healing and preaching and teaching and casting out demons. So today we want to look at that last component, the healing of the sick, and that is a thing that I think most people do realize Jesus did.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In fact, here is a good summary from Matthew Chapter 9:35, 36. This just sort of sums up what Jesus is doing: ³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness.

That is a little cameo—a little snapshot—and indeed, we have already looked at teaching, preaching...we have looked at the subset of healing—of exorcisms—casting out the demons and evil spirits—and now healing every disease and sickness.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and in fact, Dale Bruner, the great commentator...we often refer to him when we are talking about Matthew...Matthew's Gospel...points out that this is actually a bookend. There is an almost identical, word-for-word passage in Matthew 4, and what comes in between are examples of the preaching, the teaching, and the healing in these early chapters of Matthew.

So, we talked about his preaching announcing the kingdom—the good news that God's rule had broken into human history with the coming of Jesus in particular, and that shalom would be the hallmark of that kingdom; and we also talked a bit about his teaching in one of the programs...the first program of the series...where Jesus spelled out what it meant to live as his followers.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that we took mostly from the Sermon on the Mount; although we kind of said it is really the teaching on the mount—that is Matthew 5, 6, and 7; and then, right, 8 and 9 are action-packed chapters. So, that is the

rhythm in Matthew, by the way; you get sections of teaching, sections of action...teaching, action. So, 8 and 9 were the actions sections following the teaching; and indeed, it shows Jesus going all over the place...I guess wherever the Spirit led him...but he is here, there, and everywhere; and basically healing every disease that he comes across; to the point where people also start bringing the sick to him because he becomes well known as a fountain of restoration.

DAVE BAST

Yes; I love the fact that Matthew says he went to all their villages and towns...you know, these little, out-of-the-way places...and you think of a modern political campaign, where there is a big advance team, and there are all kinds of consultants, and they are always trying to maximize the candidate's time. So, don't waste your time going there; there are not enough people...no, you've got to go...or sometimes famous preachers are like that, too. They want to fill an arena or they don't think it is worth showing up; but Jesus just seemed to go wherever the Spirit led him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sometimes people...in the heartland of the United States, anyway...sometimes refer to themselves as the flyover states. Nobody ever goes to their states; you just fly over Kansas or Oklahoma on your way to California. A lot of people feel flown over, and that is not a positive...it is no joke. They feel neglected; but Jesus didn't do that. There were no fly-over people in Jesus' ministry. He went to them; and when he did, Dave...and we will be talking more about this in the next segment, too...but he got nitty-gritty; he got right down into the mud and muck of our fallen humanity. He was fully divine, but fully human, and he didn't consider himself too lofty to condescend, as it were, to the level of those who needed his touch.

DAVE BAST

You know that passage that you just read from Matthew 9...a couple of verses...in that same paragraph, really, it says that ^[36]Jesus, when he saw the crowds, had compassion on them...that beautiful word in the New Testament that really referred to his guts. We would say: His heart went out to them, but the Hebrews located compassion a little bit lower in the body...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

What it speaks to is, as you said, Jesus' real humanity, not shrinking in the face of human need, whether that was spiritual need...because in this case, many of the crowds, as he saw them, were like sheep without a shepherd; they were kind of lost and wandering...or physical need, as in the case of the sick, who would kind of flock to him or be brought to him. Jesus felt pity and compassion for them, and it made him do something as a result.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and you know, for a lot of us, when we encounter at least certain kinds of sickness and disease, we recoil; sort of the way you do when, you know, take a leftover container out of the fridge and open the lid, and oh, it has just turned all green and black and moldy and yucky; and you are kind of...your jaw tightens...and sometimes, you know, you talk to nurses or people who work in emergency rooms, where they see terrible things, and you say: You must have a strong stomach. Well, Jesus must have had a strong stomach...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But I think it was his compassion that let him overcome that *ew* factor. He was never grossed out; nobody was beyond the pale of his reach; he was always present to those who needed him.

DAVE BAST

Yes; I mentioned in the intro to this program visiting that hospice in Calcutta; the original place where Mother Teresa went when she got permission to leave her cloister and go out into the streets; and really, her impulse was just to gather these dying people, many of whom had terrible diseases, and were just dying of neglect; and to see the care that went on there, and how they would reach out to these suffering people; and it was gross; and that is what...you know, how can someone do that? Where do they find the strength to serve in such a way? The answer is, I think, Jesus' example; and we will see a story where he does exactly that when we look at the first of his healing miracles next.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and we mentioned earlier in the program that the action segments of Matthew follow the teaching segments. So, the Sermon on the Mount ends in Chapter 7; and when we get to Chapter 8, we immediately are shown Jesus kind of going into action, where we read this:

¹When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. ²And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ³And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Interesting story. This man seemed to really believe that...and again, Jesus' reputation was preceding him...that Jesus could do this, but would he do it? You know, *if you are willing*...you know, that shows great faith. He is not presumptuous...he is not saying: Hey, heal me! No, he is saying: I know you can if you will; so, up to you. And Jesus said: okay, well, I do...I do want to do that; and so, he touches him; and of course, we know that in the holiness codes of the Old Testament, touching someone who is sick or touching a dead body or touching particularly someone with this leprosy...and there seems to be a number of different diseases in the ancient world that get kind of lumped under the...

DAVE BAST

Lumped under *leprosy*, yes—skin diseases.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, you become unclean; and if you are a religious leader, that means you have got to leave the camp for seven days; you cannot go to the Temple, and so forth. What is interesting with Jesus all through his ministry is that Jesus' contagion of holiness is stronger than the contagion of disease. Jesus never became unclean by touching the sick or the dead...they became whole or alive again.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, it went the other way: Jesus didn't get contaminated by badness, these people got contaminated by goodness, and were restored.

DAVE BAST

I love that idea. Isn't that a wonderful thing? So, Jesus could kind of ignore those laws and those rules and those rituals. I mean, after all, he was the one...or maybe we should say his Father was the one who promulgated them in the first place, and he was sort of free of them; which incidentally also kind of irritated his foes—his critics—ticked them off, that he could kind of do his own thing when it came to the ceremonial

stuff. So, as you said, Scott, I love this idea of a reverse sort of flow. The uncleanness bounced off him and went right back into the sufferer with healing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Jesus...I did a whole series...a sermon rather, from the Gospel of Luke; and I think I titled the sermon *The Touch*, because Jesus is always touching; and what a thing, to think of the divine Son of God touching you physically...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, just listen to these. We've got a number of these; these are all from Mark's Gospel, but this is, you know, I think Peter's mother-in-law: Jesus came and took her by the hand and lifted her, and the fever left her. There was a deaf person, who was both deaf and mute: Taking him aside, he put his fingers into his ears and spat and touched his tongue. People brought a blind person and begged him to touch him: He took the blind man by the hand. Again, Jesus took them by the hand; the little girl who was sick: Jesus took her by the hand and said, "Little girl, get up," and she did. Touch, touch, touch, touch, touch...he takes them by the hand. You know, good doctors are told, you have to lay hands on your patient...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is what a doctor has to do. Jesus, the Great Physician, always was laying hands on those who needed him.

DAVE BAST

Right; but the difference is that his touch was not either diagnostic or therapeutic...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

Dave Bast: He didn't have to touch people or manipulate them to figure out what was wrong, or to try to bring relief or healing. I think his touch, quite simply, was to convey a message; and it is the message that made this man with leprosy wonder and ask: Are you willing? And so, Jesus not only said: Yes, I am willing; he conveyed that physically by laying his hands on this man and healing him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Once in a while Jesus did miracles by remote control. He was able to do that, too; but yes, typically...you are right; the ones when Jesus healed from a distance were the exception. The rule was that he would stretch out his hand and touch; and again, the very ones that, as a Jewish person, as a rabbi, as Jesus more or less was, he wasn't supposed to do that, but he did.

A while back on *Groundwork* I think we looked at a passage where Jesus enters the synagogue on a Sabbath and immediately runs into a very sick man; and we said it almost looks like the Pharisees planted that man there...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because they knew Jesus couldn't resist touching him and healing him, even though it was the Sabbath; and then they could jump all over him for that.

DAVE BAST

Yes, right; so, once again we see Jesus sort of flouting their conventions. He never broke the law, per se, but he would often just sort of dismiss their interpretation or their way of understanding things; but you know, I think, Scott, this has something to say to us today...this incident, especially with the man with leprosy, where Jesus reaches out, because I have a hunch that most of the people who enjoy *Groundwork* don't have any question about whether God is able...

SCOTT HOEZEE

To heal, yes.

DAVE BAST

To heal them or their loved one, or to deal with some situation in their life, or whatever the case may be; but many of us wonder: Would he want to? Would God really want to get involved in *my* mess? Would he reach out and not be put off by me? You know, I often think if other people knew what I was really like inside, they wouldn't want anything to do with me. Could God be the same? He does know; and the answer is: Totally. God doesn't mind the mess. He is willing to touch us as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and indeed, as John Calvin once noted, Jesus was able to touch all these people with a real human hand because he became genuine flesh of our flesh, and he wants us to be flesh of his flesh; and we know that not every prayer for healing is answered the way we want; but we know it is not because God is not willing. Who knows all the ins and outs of any given situation; but Jesus took those same hands and arms and stretched them out on the cross once, and that shows you how far he was willing to go to reach out...

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Is he willing to heal us? Yes, he sure is; that is how far his own flesh was taken to show that willingness.

DAVE BAST

Yes; you know, sometimes people will ask...you are doing a sermon or a Bible study or something...well, why didn't Jesus heal everyone? There must have been plenty of other sick people in Judea or in Galilee...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Most *weren't* healed...

DAVE BAST

Yes, exactly; but the question applies to us, too. Why didn't Jesus heal my mother or my father or my spouse or my friend when we prayed? Yes, these are mysteries, Scott, as you say, that are beyond our understanding. The kingdom has come, but it has not yet come in its fullness, so we wait; and these signs of the kingdom's presence—signs of health and wholeness—are pointers that are supposed to energize us in order to wait.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and that is a good point, Dave, because in John's Gospel, he uses a different word for miracle than Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He always uses the word *semeioo* or *semeion*, and that means a sign; and in John's Gospel, it was like an arrow. You know, sometimes on the road you will see a sign with an arrow telling you you need to turn left, or it is pointing you toward the entrance of the convention center; that is what the miracles were. Not everybody was healed in Palestine, even when Jesus was here on earth; but each healing was like an arrow saying: We are heading to the kingdom of God, where one day all will be healed. As Isaiah said in his 35th chapter, that when the kingdom comes, Isaiah predicted:

⁵The eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶The lame shall leap like a deer; the tongue of the mute will sing for joy; ¹⁰and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

That is the ultimate vision of the kingdom of God, and each healing of Jesus was a sneak preview...a little arrow saying: Keep looking that way. This is where we are headed; this is where we are going.

DAVE BAST

Right, absolutely; and we will look at one particular sign that John describes before we close this program.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this final segment in the final program of a four-part series on the ministry of Jesus—the teaching, the preaching, the exorcisms, and in this program, the healings.

Dave, we were just talking about John's Gospel, and how there is...in John's Gospel, from Chapter 2 through 12...in John's Gospel it is called the book of signs. So, there is the prologue and the introduction in John 1; 2 through 12 the book of signs; and then 13 through 21, the book of glory; and right in the middle of the book or signs...or actually nearing the end of it, we get a great story from John 9 about a man who had been blind from birth.

DAVE BAST

So, we read that: ¹As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. ⁴As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. ⁵While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁶Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, put it on the man's eyes ⁷and said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means *sent*). So, the man went and washed and came home seeing. So, Jesus' miracles...we talked in the previous segment about how Jesus touched people, and indeed, he touched this man, but this is one of those miracles that has one of those odd little extra elements: What is the deal with the mud?

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Why does he have to make a mudpack for the guy's eyes and then send him away? In fact, the man doesn't even know who healed him, and he won't know until the end of the chapter, because he literally never laid eyes on Jesus after his healing. So, kind of a funky thing with the mud...I don't know why Jesus did that, and in other cases just said: Be healed; but, that is the story.

DAVE BAST

It is the story; and you know, I wonder...I don't have evidence for this necessarily...this is my idea, or I haven't seen it anywhere else, but I wonder if the physicality of that act wasn't, in a sense, sacramental. You know, we think about why would Jesus take a bit of bread and a cup of wine and say: Keep doing this; keep eating these things. When he could just say: You know what? I am giving my body for you; you are forgiven; just believe that. Or why water? Why splash water on someone, or even dunk them underwater as a sign of forgiveness, of the washing away of sins? But, we are physical creatures, and maybe there is something to that...that this was a physical element added to the word of Jesus in order to help the man believe.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Interestingly, this story begins with the disciples seeing this man, blind from birth, and they say: Well, Jesus; who sinned here? This guy or his folks? You see something bad, it must be a punishment for something, and a lot of people still think that way; but Jesus...whenever people asked Jesus something like that, he said: The world doesn't work that way, people...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Don't look for cause and effect. Nobody sinned; he didn't sin; he didn't deserve this; his parents didn't sin; they didn't deserve to have a child who had this particular disability; but this will be for God's glory because I am going to heal him now. So just by way of caution, we shouldn't always be looking to think that God is just going around punishing tit for tat people...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No; it doesn't work that way; but, Jesus, who is the light of the world, as we found out in John 1 already: The light that shines in the darkness...he is here to restore light, including light, literally, into this man's life. This man whom...we have mentioned the commentator Frederick Dale Bruner...Dale Bruner refers to this man as the man who always told the truth, because every time people asked this blind, and soon to be formerly blind man, a question, he totally told them the truth, and it got him into a bit of trouble, actually.

DAVE BAST

Yes, it did. So, we have said that these are signs in John's Gospel; that the miracles aren't just wonders...aren't just acts of power...which is what they are called in the first three gospels...*dunamai*...powerful acts of Jesus, but they have a deeper meaning, and here it is pretty clear because the sign is linked to one of the "I am" sayings of Jesus. So, I am the light of the world, and to show it, he opens this man's eyes who had never seen light, and yet, Jesus in his power restores his sight.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is a stunning miracle, but you wouldn't know it from reading most of John 9, because soon enough we find out...dum dum, dumba dum...it's a Sabbath and you are not supposed to work on the Sabbath...so, this man, who doesn't even know who healed him because he never saw him, literally...the Pharisees and the chief priests call him in and say: Somebody did some work on the Sabbath, and they did it to you, so you have to tell us all about this. Well, he just said: I don't know; it was somebody who did this...and they call his parents in...

DAVE BAST

Yes, they called his parents...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Was he really born blind? And they say: Yes, he really was. Nobody really wants to acknowledge the miracle; they are so hung up on law and custom, and they don't even savor this amazing miracle; and at the end of the story, the man and Jesus finally meet up, but there will be a point where the Pharisees...you know, Jesus said: That is why I have come, to restore light to those who don't have it, and to make blind those who do; and the Pharisees say: Are you saying *we're blind*? And Jesus said: I didn't say it, you did.

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, sure enough...

DAVE BAST

If the shoe fits, wear it. So, there is this dialogue where Jesus finally comes back to the man, and for the first time he sees Jesus, and he is trying to figure out who did this for him, and Jesus asks him: ³⁵“Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶“Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” (You know, it’s like: Anything you say I will do...anything you say.) ³⁷And Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” ³⁸Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshipped him.

So, there is an irony here as Jesus adds that he came into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and we see that in this story, as we have just said. The religious leaders, so hung up on Sabbath regulations that they are blind to the wonderful thing that happened; and as we said, Dave, all of Jesus’ healings were arrows pointing to the kingdom of God, and they were so averse, these religious leaders, to wanting to believe that that was true that they couldn’t follow the arrow...they couldn’t get into the kingdom the way this man clearly did; and so, it is a tragedy; but again, as you said, Dave, the healings of Jesus...they were not meant to be one-off, eye-popping spectacles...they were not just meant to entertain or to titillate; they were part of the proclamation. Jesus came, and we have looked at teaching, preaching, exorcism, and healing; and what all of them said was in Jesus the kingdom of God has come right in our midst. He was always proclaiming that particular piece of good news.

DAVE BAST

And if you can see it, if you can respond to it, then give thanks to him, because that is the Spirit’s work in our life that enables us to do that, thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast, and we hope you will join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

We have a website, groundworkonline.com. Visit it to share what you like about *Groundwork*, and what you would like to hear on future programs.

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