



Every Life Valued

JESUS VALUES EVERY PERSON.

MATTHEW 8:1-4,14-17; 9:1-8

You might think it would be unnecessary to ask the question, “Does God care for everyone?” Yes, absolutely, would be most people’s answer. God cares for and values every person regardless of age, nationality, ethnicity, or social status. Since that is so, a corollary question must be asked: “Should followers of Jesus care about and value every person?” The answer is yes, but what should that look like?



What are some things that make people feel valued? What might make them feel undervalued?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

MATTHEW 8:1–9:8

Matthew’s Gospel is organized around two major activities of Jesus—teaching and healing. An example of that organization is found in Matthew 4:23–9:35. This section begins with a broad statement that “Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people” (4:23). It concludes with a very similar statement in 9:35, stating almost the same thing that Jesus was going throughout the villages, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the good news of God’s kingdom and healing various diseases.

Between those two bookends, the text first gives to us a body of teaching called the Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29). Next, comes the healing ministry of Jesus, beginning in 8:1. In this section, Matthew recorded various healing miracles performed by Jesus. These miracles would include the healing of a leper (8:1-4). Matthew also relayed the story of the healing of a Roman centurion’s servant, which further enforced the authority of Jesus as Messiah (vv. 5-13). Peter’s mother-in-law was cured of a fever that led to numerous healings in the town of Capernaum (vv. 14-17). In addition to healing various diseases, Jesus encountered people who suffered from demon possession, and He cast out the demons inflicting these people (vv. 28-34).

Within this healing narrative, Matthew included the accounts of two would-be followers of Jesus who drew back from making the commitment to follow Him because they considered the cost too high (vv. 18-22). Also included is the account of Jesus calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee, leading the disciples to ask, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him” (vv. 23-27).

 **Review Matthew 8:1–9:8 in your Bible. Highlight the different ways Jesus reacted with people. What kinds of needs did He address?**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

LEPROSY (MATT. 8:1-4)

¹ When he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. ² Right away a man with leprosy came up and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” ³ Reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, saying, “I am willing; be made clean.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ Then Jesus told him, “See that you don’t tell anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

VERSE 1

Following His Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5–7, *large crowds* followed Jesus down from the mountain. They had never heard someone teach with such authority (Matt. 7:28-29). The fact that the crowds followed Jesus does not necessarily mean they acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. Many followed only out of curiosity.

VERSE 2

As Jesus came down from the mountain, *right away* He encountered a *man with leprosy*. The term *leprosy* covered a variety of skin diseases from simple psoriasis to the full-blown disease that causes nerve damage, skin lesions, and open sores. In certain forms, leprosy can spread to others through body fluids from the nose and mouth. Leprosy was a dreaded disease with no known cure.

To prevent the potential spread of leprosy, lepers were isolated from society. They were required to live alone (Lev. 13:46) or to live in colonies with other leprous people. If anyone approached them, they would have to shout, “unclean, unclean,” as a warning to stay away. The disease rendered a person both physically and ritually unclean. So for this man to appear among people and approach Jesus was unusual.

The leper knelt in respect before Jesus, addressing him as *Lord*. In that term was respect, reverence, and acknowledgment of the authority of Jesus.

The leper stated his request: *if you are willing, you can make me clean*. There are two elements in the leper’s request. First, there was a belief in Jesus’s divine sovereignty—*if you are willing*.

This was not a demand but a request. Second, there was a belief in the power of Jesus to heal him: *you can make me clean*. The leper did not know if Jesus would heal him, but he was confident Jesus could. There was no doubt whatsoever in Jesus's ability to heal. These two elements are necessary in every petition for healing—belief in God's sovereignty and belief in God's ability.

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VERSE 3

In response, Jesus ***touched*** the leper. He could have just spoken a command as He did in other instances. For example, Jesus healed the centurion's servant from afar without touch (Matt. 8:5-13). But in this instance Jesus reached out His hand and touched the leper. This would have rendered Jesus "defiled" according to the teachings of the day. By touching a leper, He became contaminated and ritually unclean. Jesus, however, would have nothing to do with the phobias of the day. Instead, He showed compassion to one of society's most unwanted outcasts and gave the leper what he probably longed for, a loving touch.

The healing occurred ***immediately*** so that all could see it happen. The defilement was gone, and everybody saw it go away. This was an obvious miracle before the crowd's eyes.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Man*

The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. (See Genesis 1:26-30; Psalm 8:3-6.)

VERSE 4

Jesus gave the healed man two instructions: First, he was not to tell anyone. This was a pattern throughout Jesus's ministry (see Matt. 9:30; 12:16; 16:20; 17:9). Why? In this case, perhaps to keep the healed man focused on obeying Jesus's instructions. Also, Jesus didn't want the acclamation of the crowd as simply a worker of miracles or the political deliverer they anticipated. He still had

more to teach about the kingdom of God. Mark tells us what happened when the leper disobeyed the command not to tell: “Jesus could no longer enter a town openly” (Mark 1:45).

Second, Jesus instructed the man to perform the prescribed steps in the law to show his healing (Lev. 14:1-32). Jesus sent him to carry out the law’s requirements. The first step of faith is obedience.



Who are the outcasts in our society and what are some typical reactions to them?

FEVER AND DEMON-POSSESSION (MATT. 8:14-17)

¹⁴ **Jesus went into Peter’s house and saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵ So he touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and began to serve him. ¹⁶ When evening came, they brought to him many who were demon-possessed. He drove out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick, ¹⁷ so that what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: He himself took our weaknesses and carried our diseases.**

VERSES 14-15

In addition to the leper’s healing, chapter 8 records the healings of a Roman centurion’s servant and Peter’s ***mother-in-law***. Matthew’s narrative of these healings illustrate Jesus’s compassion toward those who might have been considered second-class citizens in Jewish society. Certainly, the leper was an outcast. The servant of a Gentile centurion would be considered to have little value as a person. The same would be true for his master, the centurion. Finally, Peter’s mother-in-law belonged to another category of second-class people in that society—women.

The story of Peter’s mother-in-law is the shortest of all the healing narrations. We are not told any particulars of the circumstances. Matthew simply tells us that when Jesus entered ***Peter’s house***, he discovered the woman had a ***fever***. Luke’s Gospel tells us the fever was high, indicating that she was extremely ill.

When Jesus reached down and ***touched her hand***, she was immediately healed. The healing was evident in what took place next. Peter’s mother-in-law ***got up and began to serve*** Jesus and the other guests in the home.

VERSE 16

The words ***when evening came*** might imply that the previous healings happened on a Sabbath (see Mark 1:21,29). This could explain why the multitudes who came to Jesus for healing came after sunset.

Among the multitudes that came to be healed were ***many who were demon-possessed***. As Jesus encountered them, He ***drove out the spirits*** by rebuking them and commanding the demons leave the person. Because of the divine authority of Jesus, these demons could only respond by obeying His command.

In addition to this activity of exorcism, Matthew tells us that Jesus also healed all those who came to Him with physical ailments. A distinction is made here between demon possession and physical sickness.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Greek word translated “fulfilled” appears fifteen times in the Gospel of Matthew, more than any other Gospel. Many scholars believe there are more than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled by Jesus.

VERSE 17

One of the prominent characteristics of Matthew’s Gospel is his pointing to the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus ***fulfilled***. Here, Matthew pointed out that the healing ministry of Jesus was a fulfillment of prophecy, quoting from Isaiah 53:4. Jesus was the Suffering Servant of whom Isaiah spoke. He ***took our weaknesses and carried our diseases***. Certainly, Matthew had in mind the entirety of Isaiah’s prophecy, which includes: “But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds” (Isa. 53:5). Jesus came not only to heal physical ailments but to heal spiritually—to save us from our sins (Matt. 1:21).



In what ways can we show that we value the most vulnerable members of society? How do these verses in Matthew provide a model for us?

PARALYSIS (MATT. 9:1-8)

¹ So he got into a boat, crossed over, and came to his own town.

² Just then some men brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, “Have courage, son, your sins are forgiven.” ³ At this, some of the scribes said to themselves, “He’s blaspheming!” ⁴ Perceiving their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts? ⁵ For which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’ ⁶ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—then he told the paralytic, “Get up, take your stretcher, and go home.” ⁷ So he got up and went home. ⁸ When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck and gave glory to God, who had given such authority to men.

VERSES 1-2

Matthew 9:1 forms a transition. Leaving the region of Gadara (8:28), Jesus ***crossed over*** the Sea of Galilee to ***his own town*** of Capernaum (see Mark 2:1). There, He began teaching. Quite possibly this took place in the home of Peter, where Jesus apparently was staying. While teaching, Jesus was confronted with another healing opportunity.

A group of men brought a ***paralytic*** to Jesus. The man was ***lying on a stretcher***. Missing from Matthew’s account is the detail of the men lowering the man from the roof to the floor (see Mark 2:4; Luke 5:19).

That these friends cared about the paralyzed man is seen in their effort to get him to Jesus. Also seen is their belief that Jesus could heal the man. Jesus, ***seeing their faith***, rewarded their efforts. Faith played a key role in many of the healing miracles of Jesus.

A common belief in Jesus’s day was that illness and disease were the direct result of sin. Jesus dispelled that belief in another incident of healing when He told His disciples that a man’s

blindness was not the result of sin (John 9:1-2). Nevertheless, this paralytic probably had lived his life thinking that his paralysis was punishment for sin. Jesus immediately dealt with the man's spiritual and mental state by exclaiming, ***your sins are forgiven***. Jesus, as the Son of God, used His divine authority to pronounce forgiveness. Forgiveness of sin is our greatest need.

Forgiveness of sin is our greatest need.

VERSES 3-8

To the religious leaders who were present, such an action was perceived as blasphemy. Only God could forgive sins. They were convinced Jesus was usurping a function that belonged only to God. They refused to believe Jesus was God.

While the objections from the ***scribes*** were not spoken aloud, Jesus in His omniscience was ***perceiving their thoughts***. He denounced their unbelief and objections as coming from the ***evil*** in their ***hearts***. The problem with the scribes was a problem of the heart.

In response to their objection, Jesus asked, ***which is easier***, to pronounce forgiveness or to make a paralyzed man walk? The scribes no doubt would have answered that both were impossible to man. Both, however, are possible with God. For Jesus to claim to forgive sin was easier than physically healing the man.

If Jesus could do the harder task of healing, then the assumption would be that the easier task of forgiving sin had been accomplished as well. So Jesus declared that He would heal the man to prove He had the authority to forgive sin. The term ***Son of Man*** was Jesus's favorite way of referring to Himself. It comes from Daniel 7:13-14, where it described a divine ruler who would reign over an eternal kingdom.

Jesus spoke of the ***authority*** He had ***on earth***. This authority was vividly illustrated when Jesus commanded the ***paralytic*** to ***get up, take your stretcher, and go home***.

Jesus demonstrated that every person has value.

In obedience to Jesus's command, the man who once was paralyzed ***got up and went home***. This was irrefutable proof that Jesus had the authority and power to heal and forgive. This was

more than an effort to win an argument with the scribes. The healing was, first and foremost, an act of compassion toward another of society’s outcasts. In that day, and unfortunately in our day as well, those with handicapping conditions are often looked down on as having lesser value than others. Once again Jesus demonstrated that every person has value.

The crowd was *awestruck* by the power of God seen in Jesus. They *gave glory to God* and acknowledged that the *authority* and power of Jesus came from God.

 Why do you think Jesus addressed spiritual needs before He addressed physical needs?



BIBLE SKILL: *Connect Old Testament prophecy to New Testament fulfillment.*

Matthew 8:17 indicates that Jesus’s healing ministry was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4. Matthew 9:6 quotes Jesus referring to Himself as the Son of Man, a reference from Daniel 7:13-14. Read Isaiah 53. List all the descriptions related to the Messiah. Next, search for the phrase “Son of Man” using a concordance. Take note of how and when the term is used. Finally, think about how Jesus could fulfill Isaiah 53 only by being the Son of Man—both divine and human.

APPLY THE TEXT

- + We should value those whom some consider to be outcasts.
- + We should value people at all stages in life.
- + We should care for and value persons with physical handicaps.



As a group, create a list of those in your community who might be considered outcasts or of lesser value than others in your area. Plan a group project to minister to them in a tangible way.



Consider your attitude toward people who are often ignored. Consider how your attitude clashes with the attitude Jesus had toward those who were deemed second class in His day. What needs to change in your attitude?



Memorize Matthew 8:3.

Prayer Needs

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