

March 7, 2021
3rd Sunday in Lent

Let's Take a Walk

As we continue our exploration through the prophetic fulfillments that we find in Jesus; fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies, we remember especially what is said in Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied a number of miraculous things that the Messiah would be able to do. For instance, as we saw in the first week of Lent, Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would give sight to the blind. And as we saw, Jesus took a man born blind and gave him physical as well as spiritual sight. He could see the world for the first time, but he also clearly saw that Jesus was the promised Messiah. At the same time the religious leaders saw exactly what Jesus did, but they lost their spiritual sight. They were spiritually blind, and that was their choice. They did not want Jesus to be the Messiah.

Last week we saw both Isaiah and Genesis being fulfilled as Jesus took a deaf and mute Gentile and healed him fulfilling Isaiah's promise or prophecy that the Messiah would give hearing to the blind and speech or hearing to the deaf and speech to the mute and fulfilling the promise made to Abraham that through him, through his lineage, all people would be blessed. And there we see that term equity. God came in the form of Jesus for all mankind. It doesn't matter your race, it doesn't matter your status, your economic status, He came to save all people because we are all His creation.

In week three, we go back to Isaiah and we see that the Messiah will also make the lame to walk. That's where our gospel picks up with this. In fact, the gospels carry two unique cases of this and will look at both. But will start with what we heard in Matthew chapter 8. Jesus, when He entered Capernaum and we have to stop there. Capernaum is rather significant it was just a fishing village that's to be sure, but it was also the home to Andrew to Peter to James and to John. And in Matthew 9:1, we read that this was quote "His own city." This was Jesus's base of operations. There are some who contended that He had a house there. But Capernaum was also the home to a strategic Roman Garrison because Capernaum was on the Via Morris. It was a major international trade route that connected modern day Syria and Iraq and Iran to Egypt everything flowed from North to South and South to North

through Capernaum and so this Roman Garrison was there to ensure that taxes were collected on the trade. That's where the disciple Levi or Matthew comes in. He also was in Capernaum and this was his job collecting these taxes.

We read that and when He entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to Him. This is a Roman centurion from this Garrison. We know a little bit about this Garrison from history and archaeology. This Garrison did not have normal Roman soldiers, this Garrison had mercenaries, hardened men who liked war and this is what was there because these were individuals that were to make sure Rome got their money and to be absolutely ruthless in the process. This centurion who's coming to Jesus, he has 100 of these kind of hardened men under him and so this centurion comes, and we read 'appealing to Him.' Well, what was his appeal? it was an appeal to Christ. Have compassion, my servant is lying paralyzed at home suffering terribly. That tells us a lot; this servant had obviously been in some sort of an accident that had resulted in the severing of his spinal cord and so he was left paralyzed but from the point where that break was, he was in terrible, terrible, pain. It was a successful appeal to Christ's compassion because Jesus responded, "I will come and heal him." This is where we get this little twist. This centurion, who has 100 battle hardened, hardcore mercenaries under him says, "Lord I am not worthy to have you come under my roof." He recognizes that Jesus is much greater because he calls Him Lord, Adonai, Master. He recognizes that as a Jew, it would make Jesus unclean to come to his house because he was a Gentile. He understands that Jesus is the Lord and Master and just as he is a centurion and he's a lord or master to the 100 men under him; that all Jesus has to do is give a command and it will be done because that's the way it is in his group. And he says, "just give the command." Sounds like a soldier doesn't it? And Jesus we read marveled and said, "Truly, I tell you with no one in Israel have I found such faith." There's the key, such faith. Faith that trusts that Jesus is God and can do a miracle. And He continues, "many will come from East and West," a reference to all nations, "and recline the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven." so here's the fulfillment of Genesis 12:3 again reaching out to those who are not Jewish; "while sons of the Kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This is a reference to the Jews, to the religious leaders, to those who would see these miracles and reject Him. It is why Jesus wept over Jerusalem during Holy Week because the prophecies

would be fulfilled, and they were fulfilled and yet they wouldn't believe. And He knew He would die; He would rise, and they still wouldn't believe. That's why He wept. Here to this Gentile centurion, He said "go let it be done for you as you have believed." That man believed Jesus had only to speak and that's exactly what Jesus gave him. We read that the servant was healed at that very moment, fulfilling again both Isaiah and Genesis.

When we go to John chapter 5, we find another situation. This time Jesus is in Capernaum, He went up to Jerusalem because it was the time of a feast. We don't know which one; but interestingly John is very precise and says that Jesus entered by the sheep gate, which is just to the North of the Temple. Why was it called the sheep gate? It's because that is where the sheep market was located. So, if you were coming, and you needed to do a sacrifice and you needed lamb, you would enter through the sheep gate. And there was you know, "Sheep Are Us," or whatever you want to call it and you could buy a lamb there for your sacrifice.

Right in that same area is a pool called Bethesda. The word means 'House of mercy.' It was called Bethesda, House of Mercy because the water in the pools would become stirred every so often, and when it did, if someone got in, they would be healed. Now this is very interesting because John records that it had five roofed colonnades and interestingly again this kind of goes along with the associates for biblical archaeology; the stones cry out. We found this, it's just as John describes it, there were actually two pools: an upper pool and a lower pool. There were walls on both sides at the top and bottom. But there was another roofed colonnade or a hallway that covered a portico kind of thing, between them. So, when you read this you know, with five roofed colonnades; they only have four sides to a square, but we know exactly why. What's interesting is that these pools are not spring fed, they were cisterns that collected rainwater. This wasn't that the spring would bubble up, it literally would be stirred. God would have mercy.

Jesus comes there and there's a man, an invalid for 38 years. I want you to think of that word invalid, what does it really mean? Invalid. It's kind of like when the whole Covid thing started out; there was essential and non-essential. Well, this is the epitome of non-essential. You are in valid. That's got to hurt. And Jesus asked him, do you want to be healed? And it's a simple yes or no question. But look at this man's response. I think he responds like

a lot of us may do today. When we're asked actually a simple yes or no question. He says, 'Sir I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred, disturbed.' We see frustration there, 'it's not my fault. I can't get to the water.' But it also tells us he obviously didn't have family or friends who would be able to be there to help him. And so, Jesus addresses that: 'no Sir I have no one to put me into the pool.' He's the one, so Jesus simply says, "Get up, take your bed and walk." And again, there is a miracle; but again, there's faith. The man had to trust Jesus that he could get up and walk.

So often today we see people who are struggling with this or that; maybe drug addiction some other problem, and they say 'I can't.' It's really not I can't, it's 'I won't.' I won't go through rehab, I won't take the job that pays less than I want, I won't. This man didn't say I won't try to get up, he had not moved those legs in 38 years, and he tried. As he tried, strength came in and he walked. But there is a similar follow up. The Jewish leaders we read, and this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. And to make things worse, John continues, "but Jesus answered them my Father is working until now, and I AM working. That sounds strange but what Jesus is saying is; He's playing back to these Jewish people what their teaching was. They taught that even though God rested on the 7th day, the Sabbath, that from that time on He continued to work on the Sabbath by upholding the universe. When Jesus says my Father, referring to God, claiming a personal family relationship; is working, He's been working up to now on this Sabbath, and now I am; (the name of God) working also. it's a definite claim to divinity, and some would say, 'Oh no, it's not.' This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him. Because not only was He breaching the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father; making Himself equal with God. And this is the foundation for all of the prophecies concerning His death. They wanted to kill Him because He was doing what only God can do. But if He can do what only God can do, the miracles, shouldn't He be able to do what only God can do, like: break the Sabbath laws, or the laws of science by doing miracles?

This is our Savior, He is God and no rules can keep Him from saving us from the law of sin and death, because He broke that when He rose from the dead. To Him be all glory, honor, and praise. Amen