

Jesus Healed People But What Was He Really Teaching Us?

Jesus is widely considered to have performed at least 37* miracles during his three-year ministry, from turning water into wine at the beginning to the second miraculous catch of fish towards the end. He also healed people, lots of people, with approximately two-thirds of his recorded miracles involving healing, and that doesn't include casting out evil spirits or raising from the dead.

So, healing people was important to Jesus, important enough for him to give two-thirds of his supernatural, miraculous, transforming energy to it. But time and time again he used the opportunity to heal someone as a practical way of teaching us something else. Something that is as equally relevant for us today as it was 2,000 years ago. Let's dig deeper then, let's go on a journey together with Jesus through the wonderful teaching that he shares with us through these astonishing healing miracles, in chronological order...

**As the Apostle, John, wrote... "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." John 21:25*

Miracle: Jesus heals an official's son

Reference: John 4:43-54

Key teaching verse: v48 *"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."*

Teaching message: This was Jesus' second miracle and the first healing one. He was starting his ministry and realised that he had to demonstrate his authority in order for people to follow him. It is significant too that the person healed was the son of a royal official. Word would have got back about the 'King of Kings'!

Miracle: Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law

Reference: Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1: 29-31, Luke 4:38-39

Key teaching verse: v29-30a (Mark's Gospel) *"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon (Peter) and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever..."*

Teaching message: Jesus had just been starting to call the disciples. He knew how significant Simon (Peter) would be, as well as his brother, Andrew. I wonder if Jesus considered that their sick relative might cause them to change their mind about following him? Imagine how different the next three years would have been if they had stayed at home!

Miracle: Jesus heals many who are sick

Reference: Matthew 8:16-17, Mark 1: 32-34, Luke 4:40-41

Key teaching verse: v41a (Luke's Gospel) *"Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!""*

Teaching message: In Luke's Gospel, chapter 4 starts with Jesus being tested and tempted by Satan in the desert, and ends with him healing people and being publicly recognised as the Son of God by the forces of evil. His mission, the battle for all of our souls, was well and truly on!

Miracle: Jesus heals a man from leprosy

Reference: Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1: 40-45, Luke 5:12-14

Key teaching verse: v40 (Mark's Gospel) *"Jesus was indignant (or filled with compassion). He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!""*

Teaching message: Two things here, both linked. Firstly, while some translations use the word 'indignant' to describe Jesus' attitude towards what the man with leprosy said to him, others use the words 'filled with compassion'. A very different meaning! It seems to fit better with what happens next, as Jesus reaches out his hand and touches the man with leprosy. Totally counter-cultural for the time, but very much the style of compassionate, servant-hearted, loving care for others that Jesus modelled throughout his ministry. A lesson for us all!

Miracle: Jesus heals a Centurion's paralysed servant

Reference: Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10

Key teaching verse: v8b-9a (Matthew's Gospel) *"But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me."*

Teaching message: Jesus recognises the astonishing faith of the Centurion, a faith the like of which he had not encountered up to that point. In responding to what the Centurion says, Jesus heals his servant, but also for the first time declares that his mission is for all peoples, not just the Jews!

Miracle: Jesus heals a paralysed man lowered through the roof

Reference: Matthew 9:1-18, Mark 2: 1-12, Luke 5:17-26

Key teaching verse: v2b (Matthew's Gospel) *'When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."*

Teaching message: To Jesus, the man's (and his friends) faith was the most important thing, this defined his eternal status. His disability wasn't as important to Jesus and he only restored the use of the man's legs to prove to the doubters that he had the authority to forgive sins too.

See separate blog post: <https://theadditionalneedsblogfather.com/2017/02/17/faith-more-important-than-healing/>

Miracle: Jesus heals a man's withered hand

Reference: Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3: 1-6, Luke 6:6-11

Key teaching verse: v9 (Luke's Gospel) *'Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"'*

Teaching message: Jesus was challenging the Pharisees and teachers of the law, who felt that it was wrong to do anything on the Sabbath, even to heal. In healing the man's hand, Jesus was confronting this cold-hearted teaching head on and showing us that we should always do good, always save life, whatever day it is.

See separate blog post: <https://theadditionalneedsblogfather.com/2018/02/22/what-the-man-with-the-withered-hand-teaches-us-about-disability-and-church/>

Miracle: Jesus heals a woman who is bleeding

Reference: Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5: 25-34, Luke 8:42-48

Key teaching verse: v48 *'Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."'*

Teaching message: Did this healing take Jesus by surprise? Maybe... he knew that power had gone out of him and wanted to know who had touched him. At first reading it seems cruel of Jesus to make her come forward, but Jesus knew what he was doing. If she had just crept away would anyone have believed her if she said that she was well now? By calling her out and making her publicly tell her story Jesus didn't just heal her physically, he restored her socially too.

See separate blog post: <https://theadditionalneedsblogfather.com/2019/04/04/what-the-woman-healed-of-bleeding-teaches-us-about-jesus/>

Miracle: Jesus heals two blind men

Reference: Matthew 9:27-31

Key teaching verse: v *'When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"'*

Teaching message: Two important teaching points here. The first is that Jesus often healed people in private, away from the crowds (*see more examples below*); he does so here, indoors, out of the way, maintaining the dignity of those he is healing. The complete opposite of some of the TV 'evangelists' that seek the biggest audiences possible for their extravagant 'show'. The second teaching point is that Jesus asks them if they believe that Jesus is *able* to heal. Note, an important distinction, being *able* to do something doesn't necessarily mean that someone is *going* to do it. We know that God heals, he is able to heal, but we also know that sometimes he chooses not to and that is at no point due to a lack of faith of anyone (*again, see below*), but is his perfect will.

Miracle: Jesus heals a man who couldn't walk, at Bethesda

Reference: John 5:1-15

Key teaching verses: v5 *"One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years."* And v9 *"At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked."*

Teaching message: The man in this story had been unable to walk for 38 years prior to meeting Jesus, but when Jesus said to him to get up and walk he did, "at once." It says much about Jesus' ability to not just heal the body but to heal the mind, as after 38 years the man could easily have doubted that Jesus could help him. In fact, as we read the story, he is still talking about needing to get into the pool in order to be healed. But when he encounters Jesus, not only is his disability removed, but also any doubt in his mind that he is truly healed has gone.

Miracle: Jesus heals many in Gennesaret as they touch his cloak

Reference: Matthew 14:34-36, Mark 6:53-56

Key teaching verse: v51a-52 (Mark's Gospel) *"Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened."*

Teaching message: For this story, our teaching message is what comes just before. Jesus has just fed the 5,000 (probably more like 15-20,000 when the women and children are added!) and has then walked on the water to reach the disciples. It is a critical time for them as they are just returned from being sent out on their own for the first time, but they have been shaken by the beheading of John the Baptist. So, Jesus demonstrates to them the power that is available to them if they choose and have faith to use it, including the power to heal.

Miracle: Jesus heals a Syrophenician woman's demon-possessed daughter

Reference: Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30

Key teaching verse: v28 (Mark's Gospel) *"Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."*

Teaching message: The woman in this story is Greek, from Syrian Phoenicia (part of modern day Syria, Lebanon and northern Israel today). Here again we see Jesus reaching people outside of the traditional Jewish faith, hinting at the salvation that was to come to all people who believed in him. This woman was a trailblazer for millions that followed!

Miracle: Jesus heals a deaf and mute man

Reference: Mark 7: 31-37

Key teaching verse: v *'He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!").'*

Teaching message: Once again Jesus takes this person away from the crowd before healing him, but the manner of the healing is different to many; it is more intimate. He touched the man's ears and spat and touched the man's tongue. Why? I believe Jesus used sensory methods of communication to show the man that he was healing him, to help him understand what was happening. And the first word the man ever heard was spoken by Jesus himself... *"Ephphatha!"*

Miracle: Jesus heals a blind man at Bethsaida

Reference: Mark 8: 22-26

Key teaching verse: v22 *"They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him."* And v25 *"Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly."*

Teaching message: Again, Jesus take the person he is going to heal to a place of privacy. He then tried to heal the man the first time but it only partially worked *"I see people, they look like trees walking around."* It takes a second try for the healing to be fully successful. Why was this? There is no doubt that Jesus could have restored the man's sight the first time, so why did he need to do it twice? Look at the first of the key teaching verses; the man was brought to Jesus, there is no indication that the man himself had any hope or faith that he would be healed. Contrast this man with the man Jesus healed by the pool in Bethesda. In healing him slowly and in stages, Jesus was building the man's hope and faith that he could, truly, be fully restored to full sight.

Miracle: Jesus heals a man born blind by spitting in his eyes

Reference: John 9:1-12

Key teaching verse: v2-3 *'His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."*

Teaching message: Disability is neither due to a person's sin nor the sin of their parents. This thinking is part of a widespread, longstanding and entirely incorrect narrative that associates disability and all disabled people with sin, suffering and being in need of charity. Jesus debunks that theory clearly and completely here (although it remains all too prevalent today).

See separate blog post:

<https://theadditionalneedsblogfather.com/2019/09/11/disability-sin-god-heaven/>

Miracle: Jesus heals a boy with an 'unclean spirit'

Reference: Matthew 17:14-20, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:37-43

Key teaching verse: v17-18 (Mark's Gospel) *'A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."'*

Teaching message: There is much that we can learn from this passage, but one thing that Jesus shows us is that what is affecting this boy is different to what was believed. At the time it is viewed as an evil spirit, although looking at the description of the boy's seizures it is likely to have been Epilepsy, a condition not understood in that era. Jesus uses the language of the day to heal the boy.

See separate blog post:

<https://theadditionalneedsblogfather.com/2019/10/31/a-boys-story/>

Miracle: Jesus heals a blind, mute man

Reference: Matthew 12:22-23, Luke 11:14-23

Key teaching verse: v23 (Luke's Gospel) *"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."*

Teaching message: In this passage Jesus heals a man who is blind (according to Matthew), and mute (according to Matthew and Luke). He is also described as demon possessed, and the people wonder by what authority Jesus drove out this demon. Some suggest that Jesus got his authority to drive out demons from the 'prince of demons' Beelzebub (another name for the Devil). Jesus strongly challenges these claims and tells them that his authority is of God, and that those who are not with him, that do not believe him, are against him and will be scattered.

Miracle: Jesus heals a woman who has been crippled for 18 years

Reference: Luke 13:10-17

Key teaching verses: v10-11 *'On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all.'*

Teaching message: There are several healing stories where Jesus heals on the sabbath and teaches us that to do good on any day is right (see the story below as an example), so for our teaching from this story let's think about the woman herself. It's the sabbath and she is in the synagogue listening to Jesus. Not unusual for the time, but today many disabled people find church inaccessible, whether physically, culturally, theologically, socially. How

would this woman get on in your church?

Miracle: Jesus heals a man with a swelling

Reference: Luke 14:1-6

Key teaching verse: v3 *'Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"'*

Teaching message: Another example of Jesus demonstrating that doing good isn't a six-day-a-week activity, it is something we should do whatever day it is. Jesus was being watched by the Pharisees and teachers of the law to see if he would do something that counted as 'work' on the Sabbath. They considered healing to be work, but as usual Jesus had an answer for them.

Miracle: Jesus heals 10 men with leprosy

Reference: Luke 17:11-19

Key teaching verse: v18 *"Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?"*

Teaching message: 10 men were healed of leprosy, but only one returned to thank Jesus.

Jesus wonders where the others are, but the reference to the one who returned as a foreigner (the man is earlier identified as a Samaritan) is yet another example of Jesus reaching out to the people of Samaria (think also of the Samaritan woman at the well, and the parable of the good Samaritan). These are extra-ordinary encounters for their time, but Jesus teaches us that his love for everyone, even those considered outcasts, is extra-ordinary, and so should ours be.

Miracle: Jesus restores sight to Bartimaeus

Reference: Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10: 46-52, Luke 18:35-43

Key teaching verse: v51 (Mark's Gospel) *"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.'*

Teaching message: Jesus had walked the road to and from Jericho many times, he must have passed by where Bartimaeus begged at the side of the road before, but on this occasion as Bartimaeus called out to him, Jesus asked for him to be brought to him. Now as a man, Jesus knew that Bartimaeus was blind. As God made flesh he knew what Bartimaeus wanted from him, but did he act on the assumption and just heal him? No, he did something really important first, he asked him a question... *"What do you want me to do for you?"* The gathered crowd must have been incredulous, but by asking the question Jesus gave Bartimaeus dignity and respect and allowed him to express what was on his heart... *"Rabbi, I want to see."* We could do a lot worse than to follow Jesus' lead when we meet someone with a disability, asking what we could do for them rather than assuming that we know.

See separate blog post:

<https://theadditionalneedsblogfather.com/2017/10/06/accessible-jesus-modelling-inclusion/>

Miracle: Jesus heals a servant's severed ear in Gethsemane

Reference: Luke 22:50-51

Key teaching verse: v51 *'But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.'*

Teaching message: A tiny story tucked away in the midst of great and significant events, but even here at the point of his arrest, with all that is to come on his mind, Jesus teaches us that his is a message of peace, not violence. He shows us that love, not hate, is what the Gospel is all about.

As we have seen, there is so much more going on in each case than just the healing itself. The healing might have been really important for the individual concerned, but what Jesus was teaching those witnesses that saw and heard him first hand, and all the billions of us that have encountered these stories since, is of far greater significance.

Many of us (but not all) who have additional needs or disabilities, or who have friends and family members that do, may long for healing or a cure; we may wonder sometimes why God can seem to ignore our prayers and pleas. But it might just be that now, just as then, God is teaching us something of greater eternal significance about ourselves, our loved ones, about him. May our hearts and minds be teachable, be willing to learn what God is sharing with us. May we be prepared to dig deeper, to explore what God is up to in our story or our loved one's story, and to understand that healing might not be what God has in mind, it might be something even more exciting!

Shalom,

Mark

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