

Matthew 15:29-39 | Jeffrey Smith

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[0 : 00] Good morning. The one responsibility I always forget about when having the message is to help maybe give Dave a couple song ideas.

! The number one reason for that is I am terrible with song lyrics. Does anyone feel the same way?! I couldn't tell you anything, but as a deer hunter I always remember that song.

Because it starts with, as the deer pants for the water. I'm like, yes, that's right! And it's deer season. Alright, that's just a side note. If you want to turn to Matthew 15, verses 29-39, that's what we're going to be looking at this morning.

And I'll just start by saying I am really appreciative of all the prayer that has been given from my mom.

All of the support and outreach. I think maybe my dad and my mom would be streaming in from the hospital right now. So, shout out to the 10th floor of Barnes Hospital.

[1 : 08] And we have a few visitors here. I'll just give a quick background. My mom's name is Kim Garland, so if you've heard that name in just, you know, prayer this morning and today.

About three years ago, she was diagnosed with stage 4 glioblastoma, which is a brain cancer. And, if you know anything about that, it is a tough road.

It is not a good prognosis. It typically doesn't carry a whole lot of longevity to it. And the Lord has been very gracious to our family and my mom.

And, you know, that was three years ago. And she has done, overall, pretty well since then. And so, they were able to, at that time, three years ago, they were able to remove the tumor.

And she's been able to go through, you know, immunotherapy and different things. And it's been a huge blessing. So, I'll just start by saying that. So, then just kind of fast forward the clock to something more current.

[2 : 20] A couple months ago, and I'll probably get all the details wrong. So, Teresa will give you the corrected version after this. But a few months ago, a couple things popped up on some scans.

And so, they were going to go in and just do a very minor, like, laser surgery. Where they just make a couple small incisions and go in. They grab a chunk of what they see just to do some biopsy.

But then they laser out all the stuff. It's pretty, like, impressive what they can do. And they came back and said, hey, surgery was a success. And you're like, that's awesome.

That's a huge blessing. Biopsy results come back negative or clean, you know. So, it's what you want to hear. And over the course of, you know, the weeks to follow, this one little incision in her head just wouldn't heal.

And it was, you know, she was starting to feel some discomfort, some pressure, some headaches, all that stuff's building. And several trips to the ER, many hours sitting in the ER, you know, which is super frustrating.

[3 : 29] If you've ever been, you're there for, I think, 11 hours was one outing. And what ended up happening was through that unhealed incision, infection went into the brain.

And so, she had three infections plus meningitis. So, just really, really rough shape. And part of it was the incision was in a place where they had radiated before.

This is all connected to the message, by the way. There will be a point to this. And so, she is right now currently on day 18 of the hospital.

A lot of that time has been spent in the ICU. They've had to do two pretty significant brain surgeries where it's just cut open, open it up, clean it out.

They've done that twice. They've removed a plate in her head. So, like, if you have a light stomach or you get a little queasy with that kind of stuff, like, it can be tough.

[4 : 32] And so, it was mentioned this morning just by Joe in the prayer request time that, you know, my dad sent an update this morning that she was, you know, a little responsive.

And that's a huge encouragement because it has not been the case for a good portion of this time. And so, I say all this because it does pertain to the passage.

I think the Lord was divinely working out something that kind of aligned what we're looking at here and, you know, what our family's been going through personally. I think it also pertains to everybody in this room because everyone at some point in your life, if you have not already, will be going through a trial like this.

And, you know, I'm going to specifically kind of speak to a trial that is health-related. And, you know, I even think about during our prayer time and our announcement time, so much of it is spent on what?

Praying for healing and praying for, you know, the wisdom of doctors and the steadiness of a surgeon's hand. So, this is relevant to everyone.

[5 : 52] And I think about, you know, just all the names of God and all the attributes of God. And one of them that always stands out is Jehovah Rapha, which is the Lord who heals.

So, we're going to look at Matthew 15, verses 29 through 39 this morning. And there's two parts to it. We're really going to just read the second part, but I'm not going to go into it. I really want to focus on this example of Jesus healing.

In verses 29 through 31. And I'm just going to give you, I'm going to do something I don't really do, frankly. I'm just going to give you, like, four thoughts.

Four takeaways of what I'm seeing in this time, like, in the trenches. Like, it's one thing to, like, fight the battle and to look back and say, this is the lesson I've learned.

And it's another thing to say, like, hey, in the trench, this is what I'm seeing. This is what I'm reading, what I'm feeling. This is, you know, what I think God's word is saying.

[7 : 01] So, let's go ahead and pray and then we'll read and then we'll kind of get into these four things. Heavenly Father, we just thank you again for the morning and thank you for this body of believers and a chance to meet together to study your word.

Thank you for the truth that it brings, the comfort that it brings, the direction, the certainty. Lord, I thank you for just the body of believers here and the love and support and just ministry that happens.

You know, I'm seeing it directly with my own family, Lord. I'm hearing about it with, you know, the likes of Awali. We're praying for family members like Kevin Pappen's sister-in-law.

And, Lord, I know that's not a common thing. It is that is largely due to the common bond we have as believers. And the example that you've given in your life, in the giving of your son, his life, your word, all of these things kind of point to, you know, how this body interacts.

And just thinking about even the fruit of the spirit as we covered in the retreat last weekend. And the first one is love. And just how you have given us that through your spirit as believers is just great.

[8 : 33] So we are just thankful for that, Lord. And just thank you for this passage. I just pray that, again, you would bring it to light as we're going through it. In your son's name, amen. All right, so just read with me, if you don't mind, Matthew 15, verses 29 through 39.

And, again, we're going to focus on the first few verses. But it says, Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. The great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others.

And they put them at his feet, and he healed them. So that the crowd wondered when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, the blind seeing.

And they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.

And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way. And the disciples said to him, Where are we going to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed such a great crowd?

[9 : 55] And Jesus said to them, How many loaves do you have? And they said, Seven, and a few fish. And directly the crowd, And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish.

And having given thanks, he broke them and gave to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of broken pieces left over.

Those who ate were four thousand men, beside women and children. And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

We've just recently, a few chapters prior, have gone over Jesus feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. So, a little surprised that the disciples couldn't fathom, how are we going to feed four thousand?

And we have seven loaves and a few fish. And it's like, we're just like that though. We forget. Okay, but focusing on the first few verses. Okay, so here are these four, these four just observations I want to give.

[11:06] This isn't rocket science. This isn't going to like knock you out of your chair. But I think these are just good reminders. The first is just the very simple fact that the Lord can heal. The Lord can heal.

He helped the lame to walk. He helped the mute to speak. He helped the blind to see. Jesus was healing these people.

And there's about eight or nine stories by my count in the Gospel of Matthew that involve Jesus healing. Okay, and a variety of different things. And the interesting thing is, okay, when you talk about healing amongst Christian circles, have you ever noticed that this, that the topic can go a lot of different directions?

Okay. And I'm going to touch on like two of the different directions it can go. So, one is, you know, you hear stories of missionaries going overseas.

And I had a chance to speak to Nick Kniebel. Nick and Anna had a chance to go to, I think it was Kenya. I know it was Africa, but Kenya.

[12:18] And Nick was sharing with us just how there were stories of folks in these villages that had just dire medical conditions.

Okay. And there was claims of being healed. My initial reaction was, I don't know if I believe that, to be honest.

Why do I say that? Because here in America, I don't see a whole lot of that, frankly. Okay. So, why do I not believe that?

I mean, I'm just going to speak very candidly here. There could be a lot of reasons. You know, in a country like that, in a third world country, part of it could be, they don't necessarily have the doctors and hospitals and medical, you know, staff that we have here.

Okay. And so, maybe the Lord operates differently in a place like Kenya. I don't know. Could he heal people that have AIDS?

[13:32] I think we would say, yeah. He could. And does he? I think he does. I think he heals people in miraculous ways that we have a hard time understanding. I think here in the States, you know, we have a little bit more reliance on the, you know, medical professionals.

And I think there's good and bad to that. I think there's good in the sense of the Lord has given these folks the understanding and, you know, the methodologies and all these things to treat various things.

And if you're looking to the Lord and saying, Lord, thank you for using these doctors and I want you to continue to use them, please, and give them wisdom like we often pray, then there can be an exercise of faith there.

But sometimes that's not always the case. Sometimes we have kind of dismissed God in some ways and we are relying fully on these folks that have gone to school for a very long time. And the reality is God is much bigger and much smarter and he is the healer than any doctor.

So regardless of whether this, these examples of healing in Kenya are in fact true, again, this is secondhand, I don't know, regardless of how the Lord heals here in the U.S., the bottom line is, and this is going to keep coming up in all four of these points, don't put God in a box, okay?

[14:58] He can heal. He can. And he healed, when you're looking at Matthew, he healed in a variety of different ways.

It wasn't the same way every time. It wasn't like, this is the formula, you come to me, I tell you this, and you're healed. He healed the centurion's paralyzed servant without any direct interaction.

Do you remember the centurion came to him and said, my servant is paralyzed. And Jesus says, okay, I will go to him and heal him.

And the centurion replied, Lord, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof. He makes the point, I'm in an authoritative position as well.

When I tell someone to do something, they just go do it. And I know you can do that as well. And he says, but only say a word and my servant will be healed.

[16:01] And Jesus did it. And Jesus healed this, this centurion's servant by proxy, remotely, not even with a direct interaction with this person.

He healed a woman that had been bleeding for 12 years. That's interesting because that's kind of a timing thing. You know, sometimes we go to the Lord and say, Lord, I'm asking for healing and I'm kind of wanting it now.

Like, I don't, like I'm praying for my mom to like be healed soon. Like, I don't, I don't want it to be, you know, dragged out for much longer. This lady just touched the very corner of Jesus's cloak and was healed of something that took, was going on for 12 years.

Jesus knew that this lady had been healed, but did he, did he, you know, again, he was like in this, in this crowd going to heal another person's daughter and this, this lady just touched his cloak.

Again, my point is, Jesus heals in a variety of different ways, in a variety of different situations, in a variety of different timelines. He healed a leper.

[17:13] He healed Peter's mother-in-law. He healed a paralytic. He healed a girl that was presumed to be dead. There is not a situation that the Lord cannot handle.

So again, please, do not put God in a box. He can heal, and he can heal in a variety of different ways. point number two, and what you're going to find out is these things are not mutually exclusive.

The Lord does not always heal the physical body in the way we want. Okay, so I just gave you the really positive, good, like, he can heal, he can, but let me give you the other side of the coin.

He doesn't always do that. On July 30th of 1967, a 17-year-old girl by the name of Joni Erickson, I think you guys know her story, dove headfirst into the Chesapeake Bay after misjudging how shallow the water was.

And ultimately, she fractured her vertebrae and became a quadriplegic. She was paralyzed from the shoulders down. And during her two years of rehab, she had the obvious feelings of anger and depression, questioning, there were suicidal thoughts in there, doubts about her faith.

[18:44] And during occupational therapy, they realized, like, she's got a gift where she can paint, you know, with a toothbrush, not toothbrush, with a paintbrush. It's like a toothbrush. With a paintbrush in between her teeth.

And she began to paint these pictures and selling artwork. And then she also learned how to write. And she was, she's a good singer as well.

And she wrote over 40 books. she later was married and her name, Johnny Erickson Tata, her married name, she admitted to struggling with a, her, just struggling with a lack of healing.

And she kind of laid this out in one of her books. And she said that she, she prayed and she fully believed that God would heal her.

And in her words, it says, I certainly believed. I was calling up my girlfriend saying, next time you see me, I'm going to be running up your sidewalk. God's going to heal me.

[19:52] And yet, Joni is still in a wheelchair today. It's been over 45 years. I watched a clip of one of her, you know, recent talks and she said, you know, the, the man in like mid John that was by the pool for 38 years.

She's like, that ain't nothing. I've been in this wheelchair for 45 years. And obviously God has not healed her yet.

And may never heal her in that sense. That is the reality. The Lord does not always heal. Even those that were healed in Matthew, guess what?

They ultimately died. I don't know when. I don't know if they lived a full life after that. I don't know if it was a short life after that. But ultimately, they died. And so, you have this wonderful picture of the Lord healing and his deliverance and his capability.

And then you have the reality of living in this fallen sinful world where death abounds. I was talking to David in the kitchen earlier. It feels like you're just hearing so much, so many stories of cancer and, and sickness.

[21 : 16] and you're like, is this just us getting to 40 and above? Like, that's probably part of it. But man, it just, it is just so prevalent in this world. We live in a, in a broken sinful world.

You know, Paul talked about the, what? The thorn in his flesh. This ailment that carried on. There's not always healing.

There's another example in 2 Timothy of a man that Paul tells Timothy, like, I'm going to leave him with you. He's ill. This man wasn't healed. So, when I talked about amongst Christian circles just how the topic of healing can be very polarizing, okay, it can happen for a couple different reasons. One is, you will sometimes hear, well, you just have to have enough faith. And if you have enough faith, this person will be healed. When you're looking at, at Paul, arguably, like, the greatest missionary who carried this, this thorn in the flesh, to say someone like that didn't have enough faith, like, it, I just, I think that's a really poor argument.

The reality is, don't put God in a box. Just because you, you have enough faith or you think you have enough faith or you're getting enough prayer, it doesn't equal guaranteed healing.

[22 : 45] Okay? Don't put God in a box. He can heal when it's unexpected and he may not heal when you feel like everything is aligned, this person should be healed.

The third thing I just wanted to highlight was the impact of prayer. 1 Timothy 2.1 says, First of all, then, I urge you that, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people.

Prayer's a really interesting thing. I believe that at the very heart of it, the value of prayer is for the glorification of God and the building of that individual's faith.

Okay? And I often think there are many times where something really good has happened. The Lord has provided something, has delivered a way out of a really challenging situation, and have you ever thought, I don't even think I prayed about that.

Like, thank you, Lord, for delivering that and providing that, but man, in the time, I did not pray. I did not lift it up, and the Lord still delivered. Okay? Does the Lord need me to pray to do something?

[24 : 03] He doesn't. He can do it however He wants. The Lord uses prayer, I believe, to build our faith, because He knows what's going to happen.

He knows the prayers that will be lifted up, and He acts in according to His will. Okay? And if He knows, you know what?

Nikki's going to be praying for this, and this is in my will, this will build Nikki's faith, then that's what will happen. And so, I just, again, want to say, thank you for all the prayer from my mom.

As this process has been slow, it has been encouraging to just, to know that there's a number of people that are lifting her up in prayer, and we're praying for the Lord's will, and we're praying that the Lord's will is healing.

Okay? It's really easy to say, I'm praying for the Lord's will to be done. That's a very easy thing to say. It's a hard thing to say, I'm praying for the Lord's will that it's healing, because what if it's not?

[25 : 09] Then you're kind of feeling like, well, I'm wrong. Okay? James 5.13 says, If anyone among you is suffering, let him pray. If anyone's cheerful, let him sing praise.

Is any among you sick, let him call for the elders of the church, and let him pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has a great power and is in great power as it is working.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Romans 8.26 says, Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words, and he who searches hearts knows what it is, what is the will, I'm sorry, what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

[26 : 36] We are praying for the discernment of the Lord's will. Okay, we are seeking the Lord for his will, and we are asking for healing in certain situations.

Again, God does not require our prayer to heal someone. He is more gracious than we could ever imagine. Every breath that I am taking right now is God's grace.

It's this common grace. It's this, you know, this sustaining grace that he gives us. So to say that, well, if you have enough faith, like, you will be able to get something out of God, that is just so out of whack.

We do not deserve anything. He is giving us far more than we could ever deserve, ask for, pray for, any of that.

And in the same breath, God uses our prayer. He does. He uses it for his glory. He uses it for the building of faith. He knows ahead of time what prayer requests will be brought to him and how these requests align with his will.

[27 : 55] Again, all for his glory. What does it say, just jumping back to Matthew 15, at the end of 31, after he heals, it says, and they glorified the God of Israel.

That is the purpose for these healings. It is to bring God glory. All right, the last point I just wanted to make is, it is really important to be discerning in healing situations.

You can talk to a variety of different folks in Christian churches and circles and, like I said, get a lot of different interesting thoughts on healing.

You know, just to kind of just be upfront about it. I mean, there are very charismatic churches and if you ask someone that attends a charismatic church, you know, if you explain the situation, their response will be very different than what you may get here at Bethel.

Just say that. There is often an emphasis of, you know, if you have enough faith, there will be healing.

[29 : 18] And, again, from everything we've looked at and everything from what scripture shows and says, like, I don't think there is that direct correlation. There's a lot of, there's a lot of ministers and popular TV preachers here in the U.S.

that, like, they make a lot of money off of, you know, healings. You think of, like, the Benny Hens of the world and, you know, in some ways it can be entertaining to kind of watch, like, what's going on? Like, people are coming up on stage and he's, like, throwing hands on them and they're falling back and they're healed.

I mean, what is happening? And the reality is, like, a lot of those folks are not being healed, just to kind of say that. Maybe all of them, I don't know. But, you just need to have a very discerning understanding of healing in this situation when you are talking about this, when you are thinking through it, when you're interacting with other, you know, people on this topic.

You will hear terms like, prepare the earth through song for his coming, or to have a hilarious celebration, or to restore the city through healing.

Those are just some of the key kind of phrases I was seeing as I was kind of looking up, like, what is some of the common verbiage, you know, used amongst kind of the charismatic kind of movement or teaching?

[30 : 52] There's also things like, I don't know if you've ever heard of a healing room. There's some churches that have healing rooms, and it's like a confession room, but for healing, and prayer cloths, and kind of this, which is apparently like a cloth coming from, I think, an apostle or Jesus or something, I don't know, that can heal, but there's this name it and claim it.

If you just name it, if you just really say this is what's going to happen, it will come true. Whether it's healing or making money or success at work, just name it and claim it.

If you just really name it really hard, you're going to get it. Or you just got to have enough faith. all of those things I'm putting in this category of you just need to have strong discernment when you hear these things to pick out what's true and what's not.

There's an interesting, if you want to turn back to Matthew 4, again, I kind of focused on just the healing stories in Matthew, 4, 23, it's really interesting because it says, so Jesus went throughout all Galilee and he was teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

So his fame spread throughout all Syria and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures and paralytics, and healed them.

[32 : 34] And I think this is an important point that Jesus was preaching the gospel of the kingdom in coinciding with healing.

And the challenge here is just simply when you're thinking about healing, think about healing in the sense of physical healing is only good for so long. The spiritual healing, the message of the gospel

is what carries on for eternity.

So it is really important to see these two things coincide together. I think John had a good, John was with me when we were talking to Nick and just hearing what was happening in Kenya and that's a great, it's a great thing to hear about healing.

It's really important to make sure that the message of the gospel is being paired with situations like that. because again, physical healing is only good for so long.

All these people that have been healed are dead. But the message of the gospel is eternal. And that spiritual healing is the utmost important thing.

[33 : 43] in closing, Revelation 21 4, if the musicians want to come up, it says, he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. Joni Erickson Tata said, her perspective now is one of great faith.

God may remove your sufferings, this is from a book she wrote, God may remove her sufferings and that will be great cause for praise, but if not, he will use it.

He will use anything and everything that stands in the way of his fellowship with you, so let God mold you and make you and transform you for the glory of God. That's the deeper healing.

healing. So for myself, as I'm going through this trial and again continuing to pray for my mom, it is important to remember God can heal.

[34 : 53] God doesn't always heal. There is just such a major impact on prayer. And be discerning in all of this. Be discerning in this topic of healing.

To close, John 21, 25 says, Now there are also many other things that Jesus did, where every one of them, were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

When I get to heaven, I am so excited to hear all of the stories of Jesus healing in miraculous ways, in ways not listed here.

It is going to be awesome. It is going to be really neat to just be glorifying the Lord and thanking Him in all the ways that He has worked in our own lives, in the lives of past, in the lives of those in the Bible.

It is going to be a miraculous thing. So let's just close in prayer. Thank you. Heavenly Father, we just, again, appreciate your word here. Just the stories of healing.

[36 : 03] Honestly, stories that I have passed by and read so many times, not really even given a second thought to, Lord, but just for the situation I'm in, just to be thankful that you are Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals, the God who has a plan and a will, and we just lift up so many of us and those that we know that are hurting and have physical ailments, and we pray for your will and we are praying for healing, Lord.

We know you can, we know you don't always heal, but we are asking that you would. Lord, and we thank you for just the resources you've given us in doctors and hospitals and all of these things, Lord, and we want to continue to put our trust and our focus in you and recognize you are the one that enables others to do the things they do and brain surgeries and treatments and all of the care that's needed.

So we just thank you for healing, Lord, for that example. We look forward to hearing all the stories of all that you've done, Lord, when we get to heaven. In your son's name, amen.