*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

March 6 - 11

“The Life of Jesus: Healing”

**Monday, March 6 Matthew 8:1-4**

*“I am willing; be healed”*

 This encounter introduces the first of three miracles recorded back-to-back by Matthew showing the special compassion and authority by which Jesus was guided in his healing of those who came to him. Lepers were regarded as unclean; Gentiles were considered outside the grace of God; and women were second-class persons in Jewish society. Having healed the leper, Jesus next heals a Roman Centurion’s servant, and then Peter’s mother-in-law. Jesus transcended the biases of society and ministered to each person with compassion.

 After Jesus came down from the mountain where he had delivered his “Sermon on the Mount,” great crowds followed him and became witnesses to his deeds. The leper who came to worship Jesus and ask for healing would have had to make his way through the outraged crowd, all the while crying “Unclean!” “Unclean!” for it was against the law to touch a leper. Jesus, however, reaches out and touches the man, and he is healed. Showing faithfulness to the law while going beyond it, Jesus asks the leper to go to the priest and fulfill the requirements of the law.

*You, Lord, do not discriminate in your care for us. Amen.*

**Tuesday, March 7 Matthew 8:28-34**

*“Two men who were possessed by demons met him”*

 As Jesus arrives on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, he is met by two demon-possessed men. Matthew tells us that they live in a cemetery and are extremely dangerous. The demons immediately recognize Jesus’ true identity as the “Son of God.” This is a title that eventually the disciples will use as they gain increased clarity of Jesus’ uniqueness as the one whom the Father has revealed to be his beloved Son. But from the demons, the title reveals their recognition that the stronghold of Satan is being invaded and overpowered. These demons apparently know quite well that there is an appointed time when the forces of Satan will be judged.

 In Jesus’ ministry the “time” has already begun with his ministry of exorcism. It indicates the arrival of the Kingdom of God and the invasion and conquest of Satan’s power, even though the time of final judgment awaits Jesus’ second coming. The destruction of the pigs leads the Gentiles of the region to ask Jesus to leave. This response is a sad commentary on what they value, for one would think they would rejoice at a victory over Satan’s demons.

*You show your power, Lord, by conquering the forces of evil. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 8 Mark 2:1-12**

*“Stand up . . . you are healed”*

 While he is preaching in a crowded house in Capernaum, Jesus is startled by the debris falling on his head as a hole is being opened in the ceiling. Certainly, his preaching is interrupted by the stretcher being lowered through the hole by four pairs of willing hands. In response to their faith, Jesus tells the helpless man that his sins are forgiven. At first, Jesus’ words seem inappropriate. Unless sin is the cause of paralysis, the poor man needs healing. On other occasions, Jesus categorically rejects the idea that sin is synonymous with sickness. Yet, here he responds as if the healing and forgiveness are inseparable.

 They are, but not in a linkage of cause and effect. Jesus’ response reveals how he sees people as whole beings. While the man on the mat obviously needs healing, what Jesus knows is that he also needs forgiveness – we all do! By declaring forgiveness of the man’s sins *and* healing him of his paralysis, Jesus has shown himself to be the Son of God who has the authority both to heal and to forgive.

*You know what I need, Lord, and you are able to provide it. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

March 6 - 11

“The Life of Jesus: Healing”

**Thursday, March 9 Mark 5:21-43**

 *“Get up, little girl”*

 Jairus, one of the rulers of the local synagogue, meets Jesus and surprisingly falls at his feet. Though the religious leaders have shown their opposition to Jesus, Jairus has a twelve-year old daughter who means more to him than his standing in the synagogue. For her sake, he is willing to risk religious ridicule and public embarrassment by begging Jesus to come to his home and heal his daughter, who is at the point of death. Any parent can understand this love for a twelve-year old daughter. She is just short of becoming a woman, but still young enough to be her daddy’s little girl.

 The interwoven stories of Jairus’ daughter and the woman with the blood disease end with a testimony of peace. As proof of her return to a full and normal life, Jesus asks that the little girl be given something to eat. For the woman made whole, he sends here away with a benediction of peace, forever cured of her illness. Peace is the common element they share, for peace is the product of Jesus’ power to heal.

*Not even death can defeat you, Lord, and eternal peace is ours. Amen.*

**Friday, March 10 Luke 7:1-10**

*“They found the servant completely healed”*

 The centurion, who as a soldier may have followed the Roman custom of respecting religion as a socially healthy force in the empire, has come to appreciate what Jesus has been doing. He has a servant near death, and sends a delegation of Jewish elders to ask Jesus to heal this man. The emissaries not only bring the man’s request, but they also lobby for him, arguing that he is worthy of aid. Jesus turns to go to the man’s house when a second delegation arrives. They report the words of the centurion in the first person, indicating that they are speaking for him.

 Jesus is amazed that a Gentile has such faith. In fact, this Gentile has faith that is more perceptive and sensitive than anything Jesus has seen in Israel. What impresses him is both the centurion’s humility and his understanding of Jesus’ power (the ability to heal from a distance). Here we see that the essence of faith is humility: the recognition of the uniqueness of God’s power and our unworthiness before it, while trusting in God’s care. The servant is healed, just as the centurion anticipated. The power of Jesus and the presence of faith form a powerful combination.

*You can heal from a distance, Lord, even all the way from heaven. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 11 John 5:1-9a**

*“When Jesus saw him . . .”*

 The Sheep Gate was in the northeast area of the temple, so called because here the animals were brought for the sacrifices. Near the gate was a pool called *Bethesda* in the native Hebrew. Apparently there were underground springs, and it was believed the waters had curative powers whenever they bubbled or moved. Here lay a great crowd of the crippled, blind, and paralyzed waiting for some movement of the water. Imagine the shuffling sounds of those needy, hurting people struggling to get into the water as it began to gurgle and move a bit.

 Here lay “a certain man,” one single, solitary human being in the midst of this vast throng. And “Jesus saw him.” This is the Gospel! Jesus sees and cares for the one person – whether it is Nicodemus, the woman at the well, this needy man, or any one of us. Jesus was never falsely impressed by a crowd, whatever its size, and never let it get in the way of the one who desperately needed him. Jesus’ question of whether the man wants to be made well seems unnecessary, but it must have stirred a small glimmer of hope. Jesus sees it and heals him.

*While I wait for healing, Lord, I wait with hope. Amen.*