

Miracles

This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.'

Matthew 8:17, NRSV

What are Jesus' miracles for? Are they simply displays of power? Divine magic tricks to prove a point?

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' miracles are much more than that. They are signs; windows into a deeper reality. They are acts of profound compassion, moments of restoration where heaven breaks into our broken world. In this short but powerful passage, we see Jesus bring healing into the home of Peter's family. This intimate act of restoration then overflows into the wider community. Matthew sees in this not just a random act of kindness, but the direct fulfilment of prophecy, revealing a Messiah who enters into our suffering and carries it himself.

Now choose a track and then return for...

Hymn Suggestions

1. "Thine Arm, O Lord, in Days of Old"
2. "At the Name of Jesus"
3. "O Praise the Name (Anástasis)"

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, our compassionate healer, we praise you for your gentle touch that brings restoration and life. Thank you that you entered our world, shared in our suffering, and took up our infirmities.

We lift to you all those we know who are in need of your healing touch. Shape our hearts to serve others with the same compassion you have shown to us. In your name we pray, Amen.



Reflective

Let's read our passage for this week:
Matthew 8:14-17.

This episode follows the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has just demonstrated his authority in teaching (Week 3); now he reveals his divinity in action. He enters Peter's house. This is not a public spectacle; it's a private, domestic scene. He finds Peter's mother-in-law sick in bed with a fever. In the ancient world, a fever could easily be a death sentence.

Notice the gentleness and simplicity of Jesus' action. Verse 15 says, "He touched her hand and the fever left her". It's a personal, compassionate touch. The healing is instantaneous and complete. And what is her response? She gets up and begins to wait on him. Her restoration immediately leads to generosity. She uses her renewed strength to serve the one who healed her.

(Pause for a time of silence. Reflect on a time you may have experienced some healing or restoration, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. What was your first response?)

As evening falls, news has clearly spread. The townspeople bring to Jesus "all the sick". Imagine the scene outside Peter's door – a crowd of desperate people, the hurting and the broken. And Jesus doesn't turn them away. He works tirelessly, healing all who were brought to him.

(Pause again for a time of silence. Ponder for a moment the compassion that Jesus brought, not just for the crowds then, but for you now. Let a sense of gratitude fill your heart.)

Then Matthew gives us the theological lens through which to see all this. He says this is a fulfillment of **Isaiah 53:4**: "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases". This is crucial. Jesus doesn't just wave a magic wand. He takes up and bears our sickness. The healing he offers costs him something. It is a foreshadowing of the cross, where he will ultimately take up and bear the sickness

of sin in the world. His miracles are a preview of the great healing he will accomplish through his death and resurrection.

For quiet reflection

- Jesus healed with a simple touch. Where in your life do you most need to know the healing touch of Jesus?
- Peter's mother-in-law responded to Jesus' healing grace with service. How can our own experiences of God's grace motivate us to serve others?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus "took up" and "bore" our diseases? How does this change your view of his miracles?

Creative Prayer Response

Think of people you know who are in need of healing: physical, mental, spiritual, or relational. Write their names down in private. Spend time praying for each of them by name, asking Jesus, the one who bore our infirmities, to bring his healing touch into their situation. If you struggle to find the words, simply picture those people who are on your heart, and be thankful that God has compassion for them.

Takeaway for this week

In response to her healing, Peter's mother-in-law began to serve. Jesus' grace in our lives should overflow into compassion for others. This week, become an agent of his compassion. Is there someone you know who is struggling physically, emotionally, or just feeling run down? Your task is to do one small, practical thing to "bear their infirmity" with them: make them a meal, send a text to let them know you're praying, offer to do their shopping, or just sit and listen to them.

Now return to the first page for Hymn suggestions and a closing prayer



Digging Deeper

Read **Matthew 8:14-17**.

Discussion Starters:

1. This event occurs in Peter's own house. What is the significance of Jesus performing this miracle in such a private setting, rather than in public?
2. The woman's immediate response to being healed is to "wait on him" (v. 15). The Greek word is diakoneo, the root of our word 'deacon'. What does this tell us about the link between God's grace in our lives and our discipleship/service?
3. Matthew quotes **Isaiah 53:4**. Read the full context of that verse in **Isaiah 53**. The chapter is primarily about the Suffering Servant bearing our sins and iniquities. Why does Matthew apply it here, to physical sickness?
4. This passage shows Jesus healing "all the sick". If Jesus is the great healer, how do we reconcile the 'now' of present suffering with the 'not yet' of eternity free from sickness and death (**Revelation 21:4**)?
5. Compare this intimate healing with the healing of the leper just before it (**Matthew 8:1-4**) and the healing of the centurion's servant (**Matthew 8:5-13**). Which aspects of Jesus' power and character does Matthew highlight in each story?

Applying this to our lives

- How can we be a community that, like the townspeople, brings the sick and suffering to Jesus? What does that look like in practice?
- The church is called to be a place of healing. In what ways can our church be a safe space for people who are physically, mentally, or spiritually struggling?
- How does the truth that Jesus "bore our diseases" affect the way we pray for the sick? Does it give us more confidence, more compassion, and anything else?

For next time:

Our final session is the great turning point where Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" and Peter confesses him as "the Messiah". That means 'the anointed one' in Hebrew, and is also translated 'Christ' in Greek. To understand the weight of these titles, read Psalm 2 this week. It is a powerful royal Psalm about God's anointed King and Son. Based on this Psalm alone, what kind of Messiah would you expect? This will help you to identify with the disciples' glorious expectations—and their subsequent shock—in next week's passage.

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FAMILIES & ALL-AGE

Matthew 8:14-17 - Jesus heals Peter's mother in law and the sick are brought to him

Helpful Resources

- Pieces of paper either cut into hand shapes, or ready to be cut into hands.
- Some appropriate snacks to hand around.
- Space to play the game described, with a chair and space all around it.

INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY

Think about all the ways we interact with people using our hands. Try it with the person next to you (high five, handshake, fist bump, holding hands to cross the road on a school trip, any other fun or elaborate handshakes?). In the story we'll hear what happened when Jesus gently touched a lady who was sick. Put your hands altogether, in a central pile on top of each other, and let's ask Jesus to help us know what it's like to be known by him. What would you say if you met him? What would you ask if he reached out to you? Offer a short prayer for the session and high five an amen!

Interactive Story

One day, Jesus went to his friend Peter's house. Peter was one of Jesus' followers, **[CAN YOU SAY 'DISCIPLE']** who we met before when he had been in his boat.

But when Jesus got there, things weren't very happy. Peter's wife's mother, who we can call 'Grandma', was lying in bed. She was very, very sick with a fever. Her forehead was hot, and she didn't have the energy to get up. Everyone was worried about her. **[PERHAPS JUST TAKE A QUIET PAUSE HERE]**

Jesus saw how sad everyone was. He walked right over to Grandma, took her hand, and gently touched it. **[YOU COULD USE THE HELPING HAND CRAFT HERE, SEE BELOW]**

And guess what happened?

The fever left her! Just like that, she was better!

[CAN EVERYONE LIE DOWN AND SEE HOW QUIET AND STILL YOU CAN BE? THEN, TO EMPHASISE THE PERSONAL ASPECT, YOU COULD SAY EACH CHILD'S NAME. WHEN THEY HEAR IT, THEY HAVE TO JUMP BACK UP]

She felt so good that she immediately got out of bed and started offering things to Jesus and the other guests. She made food for everyone, including Jesus, to say thank you for making her feel healthy again. **[YOU COULD HAVE SELECTION OF SNACKS AND ASK EACH PERSON TO PASS ONE TO SOMEONE ELSE UNTIL EVERYONE HAS SOMETHING]**

Later that same day, as the sun was setting, lots of people heard that Jesus was at Peter's house. Many people who were sick or unwell came to the door.

Jesus didn't get tired or turn them away. He loved everyone! He spoke a few words, and made people better. He touched the sick people, and they were healed. It wasn't magic, it was because he was God come to be with us. **[CAN YOU DO AN 'AMAZED' FACE?]**

Jesus did all of this to show that He was the special person God had promised long ago—the one who would deal with the bad things in the world. He came to make everyone feel better, both on the inside and the outside, because He loves us so much!

GAME AND ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

- **‘Helping Hands’ craft:** give each child a piece of paper. Have them trace their own hand and (help them if needed) cut it out. They can decorate the hand with words or drawings that represent how Jesus’ touch brought healing. For example, they could write ‘Healed’, ‘Loved’, or ‘Comfort’. You can also encourage them to draw a picture of themselves helping someone else, and/or writing the names of people they’d like to pray for.
- **Game:** Jesus was very calm and gentle as he healed ‘Grandma’. Put one chair in the middle of a circle, and one at a time the children put on a blindfold and sit on the chair. Point out volunteers to see if they can gently and quietly get close enough to tap the person on the shoulder, without them pointing to indicate where they are moving.

TALKING POINTS

- What can we do to help when people we know are not feeling well?
- What do Jesus’ miracles tell us about who he is?
- Do you think we can talk to Jesus when we’re feeling bad or sad or other emotions?

Now return to the first page for Hymn suggestions and a closing prayer