

Yes You Can! - Matthew 8:1-17

Introduction: Thus far, in our study of Jesus' life in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew has carefully and methodically laid out the qualifications of Jesus as the Messiah and ruler of the kingdom of heaven. We have seen Jesus' legal qualification through His genealogy. We have seen His prophetic qualification through the fulfillment of prophecy by His birth. We have seen His divine qualification by God's pleasure of Jesus at His baptism. We have seen His spiritual qualification by His resistance to Satan's temptations. And we have seen His theological qualification through the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. There is but one other qualification of Jesus we need to be shown – His divine power.

In chapters 8-9, Matthew records nine miracles out of hundreds, perhaps thousands of miracles performed by Jesus during His three-year ministry. Mark, Luke and John recorded many of the other miracles of Jesus.

In these chapters, Matthew aims to show beyond any doubt that Jesus is, in fact, the very Son of God, because only God could possibly perform such supernatural feats such as healing, resurrection, taming nature, and casting out demons.

These miracles were the supreme proof of Jesus' divinity and credentials of His messiahship. But on a very practical level, Jesus' miracles demonstrate how He changes lives. People who had been told they would be blind for life, upon coming to Jesus could suddenly see. People who were limited by their paralyzed and shriveled limbs, upon coming to Jesus could walk. People who were gripped by emotional demons, upon coming to Jesus were set free. People who were deemed as outcasts by society, upon coming to Jesus were made whole and loved and accepted. In every case, when the world and nature said, "*No you can't,*" Jesus said "*Because of my power; yes you can!*"

This morning, we're going to look at four miracles of Jesus and learn how Jesus is telling us, "*Yes you can!*" First, because of the power of Jesus:

1. You Can Take a Risk in Trusting Jesus (1-4).

After finishing His sermon Jesus came down from the mountain and many people were clamoring for His attention. People were packing in around Him like groupies around a rock star. But suddenly, they all parted like the Red Sea, as a certain man stepped up to see Jesus. From the midst of this mass of humanity stepped "*a leper.*"

Leprosy was the most feared disease of the day. It was highly contagious. It was not a pretty sight. A leper was covered with bloody sores all over the body. The skin was extremely wrinkled, hair began to fall out,

fingers and toes literally fell off, the voice became raspy, and the sores produced a stench so bad you could hardly stand to be close. And to make matters worse, there was no cure.

The Old Testament law said that a leper was to be banned from society, and put in colonies. Their only human contact was with other lepers.

This was the plight this man who came to Jesus. No doubt the priest had sent him away, but Jesus would bring him back. The crowd drew back in fear, but Jesus was drawn to him in love.

The leper came to Jesus saying, *"Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."* He called Him *"Lord."* He did not doubt the authority or the power of Jesus. His only question was about the compassion of Jesus. *"Lord, nobody else cares about me. No one else wants to come near me. Nobody understands me. Do you care? Will you be my friend? Are you willing to take a risk on me?"* For this man, it wasn't a question of **could** Jesus heal him, it was a question of **would** Jesus heal him.

The priests had driven this man from his family. He could never attend a synagogue or the temple. He knew how the Pharisees and scribes felt about him. He wanted to know how Jesus felt. He wanted to know if this one who taught with authority could back up His words with action.

Note in vs. 3, *"Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man."* No one had ever done that before. Everyone else had run from him. Parents had taught their children that if a leper ever got close, they were to throw stones at him to keep him away, but no one had ever touched him. But not only did Jesus take a risk in touching this man, He went the ultimate second mile and said, *"I am willing, be clean!"*

Then, *"Immediately he was cured of his leprosy."* The man's sores dried up. His skin smoothed up. His fingers and toes livened up, and His voice cleared up. He was cured!

Jesus was willing to risk His health, His reputation, and His ministry on this poor leper. He knew that this man needed what He alone could give. The opportunity for ministry was knocking, and He had to answer, both for the leper, and for the multitude to witness His power and authority.

What does this mean for us? Well, I doubt if anyone here has leprosy, or will ever get it. But in the Bible, leprosy is almost always synonymous with sin. You may not be a leper, but everyone here has been afflicted with the disease of sin. Like leprosy, sin is a disease that invades our life and we are powerless to do anything about it, but Jesus can! He's willing to take a risk on you. You may feel like you don't deserve it. You may feel like an outcast. The world may have beaten you down, and left you for dead, but Jesus is reaching out to you saying, *"I am willing. Be clean!"*

The question is; are you willing to take a risk on Him? Are you willing to place your life in His hands? Jesus is saying, *"Because My power is unlimited, yes you can take a risk."*

But not only that, this second miracle in vs. 5-13 teaches that:

2. You Can Find Ways to Overcome Obstacles (5-13).

Because of Jesus' unlimited power, He could transcend any obstacle. As Jesus was coming in to the city of Capernaum, *"a centurion"* approached him. A centurion was an officer in the Roman army, a commander over 100 men, a Gentile who was hated, despised, and feared by the Jews.

He said, *"Lord my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering."* Now, let me say here that what this man said to Jesus was highly unusual. Romans were usually cruel to their slaves. All they wanted out of them was work. This centurion seems to be different. Evidently, this man thought very highly of and cared for his servant.

Note that he didn't ask Jesus to go to the servant. He just stated the problem. Jesus responded, *"I will go and heal him."* Now, it's curious what the centurion said next. He said, *"Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed."*

This man's reply to Jesus' intention to go to his house was motivated by his understanding of Jesus' authority. Like the leper in the previous verses, this man called Him *"Lord."* He was not just being courteous. The title *"Lord"* refers to one who is a ruler or a master. I believe this man recognized Jesus as Son of God.

Knowing and understanding something of the authority of Jesus, he said, *"Just say the word, and my servant will be healed."* He recognized that the power of Jesus was not limited by time and space. He knew Jesus could heal and he believed Jesus could heal anywhere at any time.

The basis for his belief is in vs. 9, *"For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*

As a man *"under authority"* he could cause his soldiers and his slaves do whatever he wanted simply by giving them orders.

He reasoned that Jesus if was *"Lord,"* He had even greater authority than he. If he with limited authority could speak an order and his will would be done, how much more could Jesus do with one word?

John tells us that Jesus is the Word that was from the beginning. He is the Word out of whom *"all things came into being."* That Word made all things out of nothing. That word knows no boundaries. It is able to transcend all obstacles. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is omnipresent. He is equally present everywhere.

So, Jesus' word for the centurion was, *"Go! It will be done just as you believed it would."* It was done.

What does this say to us? It says, *"Yes you can overcome obstacles."* Obstacles don't have to become unmovable objects because of the unlimited power of Jesus. Detours don't have to be dead-ends because of the unlimited power of Jesus. Because of this unlimited power, we can pray for someone on the other side of the world and God hears. We can pray for something now and God may respond later. With God, all things are possible.

Finally, the next couple of miracles teach us that:

3. You Can Stop Worrying and Trust God's Presence (14-17).

Vss. 15-17 describe two other incidences of Jesus' miraculous healing power.

First, upon entering Peter's house, Jesus found Peter's mother-in-law *"lying in bed with a fever."* In those days, there were no aspirin or antibiotics to take, or no ER's to go to. In those days a sickness like this could be life threatening. In those days, when someone got sick enough to go to bed, it was cause for worry. They may not ever get up!

Vs. 15 says that Jesus *"touched her hand"* like you might hold the hand of a sick friend. At that moment, *"the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on Him."*

One minute she's laying deathly ill, the next moment she's in the kitchen whipping up a casserole! One minute everybody's worried that she might not make it, and the next minute she's worried about Jesus having enough to eat!

Sometimes we come to church with all these worries and problems, and we hear what God is doing in someone else's life, and we think He's not doing anything about me. We think, *"Where is God in all my problems?"* Let me tell you where He is. He is with you. You cannot escape from His presence. Jonah tried to escape from God's presence, but he couldn't.

The Psalmist said, *"Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?"* The answer is nowhere! Everywhere you go, there He is! We need to always remember that. Even in times of worry and anxiety; and trouble and trials, the Lord is right there. We simply need to trust Him.

Secondly, Matthew points out that later that evening, just about the whole city of Capernaum showed up at Peter's doorstep, *"many who were demon-possessed were brought to Him, and He drove out the spirits with a word, and healed all the sick."*

Can you picture that scene? As Jesus is sitting on the front steps of the house, every handicapped, diseased

and suffering person in the town is comes by bringing all their buddies. One by one, Jesus meets and heals each one.

So, what's the point? We know that Jesus came to heal people already. Well, I believe that Matthew wants us to know that Jesus is there for everyone. He wants us to know that Jesus power is available to all. There's no limit to the quality of His power or the quantity of His power. We don't have to wonder if it will run out. He doesn't get tired of loving us. He doesn't wish we would leave Him alone. He's always available and able to meet our needs. God's love and power is for the whole world.

Conclusion: The story is told of a lady who lived in the country back in the late 40's. She wasn't very experienced in the modern ways of the world. She didn't have much, but one of her neighbors talked her into having electricity put in her house. So she did. But after a few months, the neighbor noticed that she didn't burn the electric lights but for a few minutes early each night. So, she asked her, "*Why do you use the electric lights so little?*" She replied, "*I do use them. Every evening I switch them on so I can see to light my oil lamps, then I switch them off!*"

Sometimes that's the way we operate as Christians. We have so much of God's unlimited power available to us, but we don't use it. Instead, we plod along in our weakness, and complain about being so tired and worn out. We struggle under the load of our burdens, trying to carry them on our own backs.

God's power is ours for the asking. With it, you can risk loving Him. You can risk trusting Him. You can find ways to overcome any obstacle. You can trust Him with all your needs.