

JESUS OF NAZARETH

THE TOUCH OF JESUS IS THE AUTHORITATIVE TOUCH OF GRACE

MATTHEW 8:1-22

4-19-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light again.

Reflect

C.S. Lewis: I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.

Welcome

God in Christ has revealed his glory. Come let us worship. From the rising of the sun to its setting the Lord's name is greatly to be praised. Give him praise, you servants of the Lord. O praise the name of the Lord!

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the comfort and courage of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance!

Candle Lighting – Light the candle as a reminder of the Easter Good News!

Call to Christ: Colossians 1:15-20

We gather apart because of Jesus. We gather apart because in him we are the body of Christ. The supremacy of Jesus in our lives is never to be forgotten or reduced or substituted. May these holy, inspired words about Jesus center and ground us together in Christ:

“Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church.

Jesus is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

Song: Behold Our God -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqrl3Lkf58> (click this link for the video)

Who has held the oceans in his hands?
Who has numbered every grain of sand?
Kings and nations tremble at his voice.
All creation rises to rejoice.

Behold our God, seated on his throne.
Come, let us adore him.
Behold our king, nothing can compare.
Come, let us adore him.

Who has given counsel to the Lord?



Who can question any of his words?
Who can teach, the one who knows all things?
Who can fathom all his wondrous deeds?

Behold our God, seated on his throne.
Come, let us adore him.
Behold our king, nothing can compare.
Come, let us adore him.

Who has felt the nails upon his hands?
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man.
God eternal, humbled to the grave.
Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign.

Behold our God, seated on his throne.
Come, let us adore him.
Behold our king, nothing can compare.
Come, let us adore him.

You will reign forever (let Your glory fill the Earth)
You will reign forever (let Your glory fill the Earth)
You will reign forever (let Your glory fill the Earth)
You will reign forever (let Your glory fill the Earth)

Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him

Psalm of Praise: Psalm 117

Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

Song: This I Believe -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-aSmurqrzA>

Our Father everlasting the all creating One.
God Almighty, through Your Holy Spirit
Conceiving Christ the Son, Jesus our Savior.

I believe in God our Father. I believe in Christ the Son.
I believe in the Holy Spirit. Our God is three in one.
I believe in the resurrection; that we will rise again.
For I believe in the name of Jesus.

Our Judge and our Defender, suffered and crucified.
Forgiveness is in You. Descended into darkness.
You rose in glorious life. Forever seated high.

I believe in God our Father. I believe in Christ the Son.
I believe in the Holy Spirit. Our God is three in one.
I believe in the resurrection; that we will rise again.
For I believe in the name of Jesus.

I believe in You. I believe You rose again.



I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord
I believe in life eternal. I believe in the virgin birth.
I believe in the saints' communion and in Your holy Church.
I believe in the resurrection when Jesus comes again.
For I believe, in the name of Jesus
I believe in God our Father. I believe in Christ the Son.
I believe in the Holy Spirit. Our God is three in one.
I believe in the resurrection; that we will rise again.
For I believe in the name of Jesus.

Song: Turn Your Eyes -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIDELcuYX3g>

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face.
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.
Turn your eyes to the hillside where justice and mercy embraced.
There the Son of God gave His life for us,
And our measureless debt was erased.
Jesus, to You we lift our eyes. Jesus, our glory and our prize.
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true.
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You.
Turn your eyes to the morning and see Christ the Lion awake.
What a glorious dawn, fear of death is gone.
For we carry His life in our veins.
Jesus, to You we lift our eyes. Jesus, our glory and our prize.
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true.
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You.
Turn your eyes to the heavens. Our King will return for His own.
Every knee will bow, every tongue will shout,
'All glory to Jesus alone!'
Jesus, to You we lift our eyes. Jesus, our glory and our prize.
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true.
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You.

Offering

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.
How is giving a practice of hope?
You can give by sending your offering to the church (P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361) or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.

Youth Celebration

Remind yourself why our youth are not simply "the next generation." Give some reasons why they are more than this. Youth, please share your thoughts too!



Prayer: A couple of weeks ago we prayed a prayer adapted from Christianity Today for our current Covid-19 situation. Below is and new prayer list that we are invited to pray:

As we continue to join hands from a distance, here are 20 more prayers for our neighbors everywhere:

We pray:

For the church, struggling with faith in the midst of global suffering: God, we believe in your willingness to heal and your power to do so. Help our unbelief.

For those who have turned to faith in Jesus for the very first time during this pandemic: God, help our new brothers and sisters grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior.

For those who don't know Jesus yet but find their hearts stirred by spiritual curiosities and eternal longings: God, in your kindness, lead many to repentance and obedient faith in your Son.

For first responders and frontline health care workers, especially in epicenters of infection: God, reinforce their ranks and strengthen them with supernatural energy.

For companies with the ability (and the mandate) to manufacture much-needed protective equipment for our frontline health care workers: God, establish the work of their hands.

For transit workers, police officers, and other public servants working tirelessly, often without adequate protection: God, give them stamina every day and keep them from falling ill.

For nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, and other long-term care facilities: God, encourage the lonely residents and strengthen the staff members who help them. Prevent further spread of infection, and comfort families who can no longer visit their loved ones.

For the incarcerated, who are particularly vulnerable to the spread of this virus: God, give wisdom to prison officials. Protect inmates and staff from both violence and illness. Deliver them all from fear.

For women and children in abusive situations: God, restrain those who commit harm. Provide protection and rescue for victims and comfort them in their vulnerability.

For countries in the developing world: God, contain the spread of infection in our world's most densely populated and poorest cities. Spare countries already burdened with disease and chronic poor health.

For Asian Americans in the United States, Africans in China, and other people all over the world subjected to COVID-related racism: God, confront this evil with your swift justice, and deliver our brothers and sisters from cruelty.

For everyone anxious about the economic future—how they'll pay for housing, food, and essential medicines: God, connect them to sources of help through the church, the government, and the community. Enable them to look toward you for provision.

For small churches without cash reserves: God, keep their doors open, and urge your people to give generously.

For educators, forced to adapt curricula to online learning, and for students, forced to exercise more autonomy: God, make homes a place of curiosity, inquiry, and study. Give special help to children without regular access to the internet and other digital tools.

For those disappointed by the cancellation of milestone celebrations like graduations, weddings, or baby showers: God, comfort them in their disappointments, and make it possible for them to gather again with friends and family.



For expectant mothers, who face the prospect of labor and delivery without the support team they'd planned for: God, deliver them from fear, and fill them with joy as they witness new life.

For women facing unexpected pregnancy in this time of economic crisis: God, help them to find the practical and emotional support they need to keep them from seeking abortions.

For churches, parachurch ministries, and other Christian organizations doing online evangelism and discipleship: God, bless our imperfect digital efforts and continue to advance the kingdom of Jesus through your people.

For those dying alone in hospitals and for their loved ones: God, draw near to them and, by your mercy, let them encounter Christ, the friend who never leaves and never forsakes.

For those involved with politics at every level: God, help our leaders to work collaboratively and communicate efficiently, setting aside self-interest for the common good.

Amen!

Scripture Reading: Please read Matthew 8:1-22

Gospel Message: The Touch of Jesus: The Authoritative Touch of Grace

Maybe take turns reading...

Review: We are in a series entitled, *Jesus of Nazareth* that is distinguishing him from all the "other" Jesus' that people have made to replace the Biblical Jesus. We do this for two main reasons: (1) to know the real Jesus better and trust and follow him better and (2) to be able to recognize false versions of Jesus and the gospel so that we do not believe them and can counter them with the real Jesus of Nazareth. Ultimately, we do this to love better, grow deeper in faithful discipleship and become more passionate in sharing the hope that we have in Christ.

Context: Jesus has just finished the Sermon on the Mount, establishing him as the great Prophet of truth. Matthew ended this section by pointing out Jesus' authority. On March 22, we looked at the latter half or chapter 8 as we entered into our first week of canceling corporate worship. If you recall, we were shown Jesus demonstrating his authority over nature (a storm), over the spiritual realm (demons) and over the biological realm (disease). We received much comfort in remembering Jesus' authority as the pandemic was beginning to make its presence felt. In today's passage we see again his authority over sickness (the leper, paralytic and the fevered woman). This morning we will focus on combining Jesus' authority with Jesus' love, compassion, mercy and grace. We will focus on Jesus' authoritative touch of grace that heals, restores, renews and transforms the untouchable and unworthy into faithful followers of his.

Meditation: Notice there is something interesting going on in Matthew's telling of the story. In two of the instances (the leper and fevered woman) and indirectly in the third (centurion's servant), Matthew specifically mentions Jesus's touch. This morning I want us to meditate and reflect on the authoritative touch of Jesus in your life and how his touch leads to his touch through you to others. I know, I find God's timing for us to read this passage on touch during the pandemic both ironic and interesting. Ironic in that we are talking about touch at a time when touch has been significantly affected by the pandemic. Interesting because I think this only heightens our awareness of it and gives us a unique opportunity to dive deeper into the wonder of Jesus' authoritative touch of grace on us.

Think about touch. It is one of the five senses; probably the one most overlooked. The other four senses



of seeing, hearing, tasting and smelling seem to get most of the attention. Furthermore, you can close your eyes, plug your ears and nose and close your mouth to get an idea of what it might be like to not have one of these senses. But you cannot do that with touch (without harming yourself!) Touch is a powerful, profound and vital aspect of being human. It is primarily responsible for noticing and identifying hot and cold, smooth and rough, pain and pleasure, vibration, shapes, location, intimacy and even humidity. Take a moment to notice all that you are physically feeling by touch right now. Talk about what it might be like to lose your sense of touch....

In the first scene of our passage, Jesus encounters a leper. A leper is a person who has a disease that...you guessed it, destroys their sense of touch. A leper with the disease long enough will often lose their fingers, toes, hands, feet and more. Why? Because they cannot feel or tell when they have been injured or infected and those parts of the body simply wear away because of repeated trauma. In the Jewish culture, the leper is unclean and untouchable. They didn't touch others nor were they touched by others. Thus, when Matthew points out that Jesus touches the leper, he is pointing out that Jesus is touching the untouchable. Jesus touches the untouchable so that they might be touched and touch again! Here is the key point. Jesus didn't have to touch the leper (as the next scene will demonstrate) but he does. Why? Jesus touches the leper to show that his authoritative touch of grace touches the untouchable so that they might touch and be touched again. You and I, apart from Christ, are the untouchable leper!

In the second scene, the centurion exclaims that he is not worthy to have Jesus, a man of his authority, in his house and to simply heal his paralytic servant from afar (Jesus is impressed with his great faith in his authority to do this). The centurion is right, he is unworthy...and so are we apart from Christ. We are both untouchable and unworthy because of our sinfulness. Matthew again is showing that the loving and authoritative touch of grace of Jesus transcends our "untouchableness," our unworthiness, our uncleanness, our sinfulness. The touch of Jesus is an authoritative touch of grace that heals, transforms and restores.... for what?

In the third scene we get a repeat of the first, Jesus touches Peter's mother in law and heals her of the fever. We again see Jesus' authoritative touch of grace in vivid display! But notice what Matthew adds to the details in her story, do you remember? She immediately gets up and serves him. Matthew is making an important point about Jesus' authoritative touch of grace. We are touched by Jesus in order to serve and follow Jesus. This is an important detail because it shines a bright light on the following fourth scene with the scribe who seems to be an odd addition within these stories of healing. What is Matthew getting at with the scribe?

The scribe boldly exclaims that he will follow Jesus "wherever you go." At this point (and we don't get any information about him other than this) he has not been touched by Jesus as the others have in this section. He simply sees Jesus as a "teacher" and has seen his authority over sickness. In saying that foxes have holes and birds have nests (a home), Jesus is making it clear that following him will not be comfortable nor easy. Jesus then escalates the scribe's situation in telling of the disciple who informs Jesus that he is going to bury his dad before following him. Jesus' response of "follow me and leave the dead to bury the dead" seems harsh at first. But only if you see him just as a teacher and not the Son of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Beginning and the End, the Savior of the world. In the end, we don't know what happens to these two, whether they follow or not.

So, here is what Matthew is getting at: **Jesus is making a stark claim that nothing in this world is more**



important than following him. He is demonstrating that his true disciples are those who experience his authoritative touch of grace and follow him to serve him. While Jesus' common grace extends to all, even healing some, his special, saving grace is extended only to a few who become his disciples.

Those who have experienced the authoritative touch of Jesus' healing grace are alive in Christ and will follow and submit to him wherever he goes. Those dead to Christ will not. They will go their own way or alter Jesus of Nazareth to another Jesus by ignoring some of his teaching that they don't particularly like.

May we recognize and embrace that apart from Christ we are the leper, the paralytic, the fevered woman and the centurion's spot-on claim that we are not worthy, that we are the untouchable. This is the bad news: "Cheer up! You are far worse than you know!" May we recognize and embrace Jesus' authoritative touch of grace in our lives that transcends our unworthiness and transforms us into followers of his no matter where he might lead us. This is the good news: "Cheer up! You are far more loved that you can imagine!" May our gratitude and delight and trust in Jesus grow as we navigate the narrow path he has us on today and embrace every opportunity as an opportunity to experience Jesus' authority as Lord and grace as Savior in our lives. And may we extend the Good News of Jesus' authority and grace by being credible (that is, believable, reasonable, honest) and coherent (that is, clear, sensible, wholistic) disciples at all times and in all places as we touch others with the touch of Christ.

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for yours in the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen!

Communion Meditation

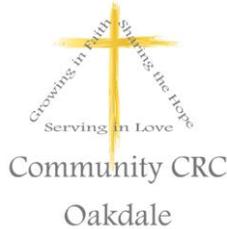
Professing: (Nicene Creed)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Proclaiming (1 Corinthians 11:23b-25) – Paraphrased



On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread and he broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Likewise, after the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

What do you miss most about participating in communion?

May our closing song be what we strive for each day knowing that Jesus' authoritative touch of grace creates lives that faithfully follow him wherever he leads. And when we wander, may we be quickly guided back by the Holy Spirit through humility and repentance.

Song: I Will Follow -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3NRyV9vKIO>

Where You go, I'll go. Where You stay, I'll stay.
When You move, I'll move. I will follow.

All Your ways are good. All Your ways are sure.
I will trust in You alone. Higher than my side.
High above my life. I will trust in You alone.

Where You go, I'll go. Where You stay, I'll stay.
When You move, I'll move. I will follow You.
Who You love, I'll love. How You serve I'll serve.
If this life I lose, I will follow You. I will follow You.

Light unto the world. Light unto my life.
I will live for You alone. You're the one I seek.
Knowing I will find all I need in You alone, in You alone.

Where You go, I'll go. Where You stay, I'll stay.
When You move, I'll move. I will follow You.
Who You love, I'll love. How You serve I'll serve.
If this life I lose, I will follow You. I will follow You, yeah.

In You there's life everlasting. In You there's freedom for my soul.
In You there's joy, unending joy. And I will follow.
Where You go, I'll go. Where You stay, I'll stay.
When You move, I'll move. I will follow You.
Who You love, I'll love. How You serve I'll serve.
If this life I lose, I will follow You.

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

Those touched by Jesus are never the same. May we live in such a way that others notice there is something different about us: that we aren't characterized by worry or anxiety but by hope in Jesus Christ; that we aren't thought of as arrogant or better than but humble, giving and generous; that we aren't rocked by the storms of this life but are found grounded on the Rock, Jesus Christ. May others know us as disciples of Jesus as we touch others with the touch of Christ.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age.