

May 9 The promise of healing (1) Matthew 8. 1-17**Life Group questions**

These stories follow straight on from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs 5-7) and make it clear that Jesus' ministry was of healing as well as teaching. Compare Matthew 4.23: 'Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.' Try to visualise the various situations and people described in these verses.

- 1 Compare Matthew 8.17 with Isaiah 53. 4-6. From Matthew's quotation of Isaiah we learn that on the cross Jesus bore our sicknesses as well as our sins and our sorrows. Pause to reflect on this, and spend some time at the foot of the Cross, giving thanks for such a great salvation.
- 2 If we or those we pray for don't appear to have been healed in the way we hope, does this mean Jesus is less powerful to save? Or is it that he bore the pains of a world which groans under the weight of as yet unresolved pain and suffering? See Romans 8.22-25
- 3 What is the role of faith in the different healings in our passage?
See James 5. 13-16, and also Mark 9. 17-29. 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!' is a good prayer. NB This does not mean that if our prayer for healing isn't answered in the way we hope, it is our fault for having too little faith. As well as the faith by which we are saved, there is a gift of faith which the Holy Spirit grants to some, as also a gift of healing. See 1 Corinthians 12. 7-11. But Paul goes on to say 'eagerly desire the greater gifts' and explains in chapter 13 that the greatest of these is love. Jesus' healing was motivated by love; if we bring others to him in love, for his blessing and healing touch, he hears and will answer, though maybe not as we hoped.

Share experiences of the Lord's healing, in your life and the lives of those you've prayed for.

Has shared prayer through the Prayer Chain, your Life Group, and other contacts grown your faith?

Have we grown in faith even when our prayers 'weren't answered'? Compare Paul's experience, described in 2 Corinthians 12. 7-10. He learnt that God's strength was made perfect in his weakness. Pete Greig, who initiated the 24/7 prayer movement, writes about his own experience in 'God on mute - engaging the silence of unanswered prayer'.

- 4 'His touch has still its ancient power'. In what ways do we seek healing at this time, as we come out of the pandemic - physically, emotionally, mentally, in our relationships? Pray for one another.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;

He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace -

No work too hard for him; in faith receive from him;

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.