

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE

Matthew 8, 9, 12

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INTRODUCTION: In the last few weeks, we've been praying and working together with the Who's Your One campaign. The idea is that there is one person out there for you to connect with, to pray for, to nurture a friendship with, so you can invite the person to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

I spoke to you about Zacchaeus, the Woman at the Well, and I told you about the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Hopefully, these messages gave you ideas about looking for that one person who is out there; that one person who needs a good word of encouragement, a friend, a person who understands.

The Bible is a story of ones. The names of Old Testament women come to mind and we know their stories: Eve, Esther, Ruth, Deborah, Sara, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Rahab, Hannah. And in the New Testament: Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla. Then the names of men come to mind: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Saul, David, Elijah, and many others. In the New Testament: The twelve disciples – then Paul, Timothy, Aquilla, Apollos – all of these people and their stories demonstrate the importance of one.

The Bible contains stories of groups of people too - the Egyptians, the Hebrew people, later known as the Jews, the Hittites, the Canaanites, the Jebusites, the Samaritans, and scores of others. While all these groups are mentioned, and while the migrations of people in the ancient world are mentioned, the Bible has this unique way of zeroing in on *one*. It's from the stories of *one* that we learn how God

interacts with people. It's from the stories of *one* that we learn about the failings and the triumphs of many.

One is important to God. One matters. Let's look at several stories of *one*.

1-THE MAN WITH LEPROSY

Our first story of *one* is found in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus healed the man with leprosy.

The book starts out introducing Jesus, and we hear lots of teaching from Jesus. People are spoken of in crowds. Chapter 4 just says that Jesus healed people but no one is really identified. And then we come upon Chapter 8.

EXPLANATION: Leprosy was a terrible disease in the time of Jesus Christ. No one went near a leper for fear of catching the disease. A person with leprosy was finished. Life was pretty much over. They were social outcasts. They would never get a hug from a family member ever again. The leper had to keep his or her distance. If someone approached, a person with leprosy was required to call out a warning. There was no known cure for leprosy. The only real cure was death.

It just so happens that the first disease identified in the New Testament is leprosy. So Jesus did not heal a person with a runny nose, or a sore hangnail, or a stubbed toe. He did not heal someone with a malady that people tend to get over anyway. Matthew introduces the world to Jesus doing the impossible.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 8:1-3

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ² A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." ³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.

EXPLANATION: Matthew introduces us to the impossible: *“A man with leprosy came...”*

The man with leprosy, the man who was supposed to warn others so they would not come near him, kneels before Jesus and humbly says, *“If you are willing, you can make me clean.”*

On that day, the man with leprosy was Jesus’ *one*. And the man with leprosy had one hope: Jesus. We don’t know this man’s name. We just know him as the man with leprosy.

2-THE WOMAN WITH CHRONIC BLEEDING

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 9:20-22

Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹ She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” ²² Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

EXPLANATION: Oh boy, here we go again with Jesus doing the impossible. This woman’s bleeding had caused her twelve years of embarrassment. Every day and night for twelve years she had to plan her day according to her bleeding problem. Along with all the issues I am not qualified to even begin to talk about, she was probably anemic, which meant she was sickly and tired all the time. Her quality of life was greatly diminished.

No one could help the woman. She had probably tried everything. No doubt her close female friends who knew her problem tried to help. Nothing could be done.

But she had heard about this healer. Crowds were following him. He was different than other religious leaders. He was actually healing people. But this poor woman didn’t think herself worthy to call out to him like the man with leprosy. No, she was just a woman, and not only that, she was a sickly woman.

“If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”

On that day, a couple of thousand years ago, the woman with chronic bleeding was Jesus’ *one*. We don’t know her name. We only know her as the bleeding woman.

3-THE MAN WHOSE DAUGHTER WAS DEAD

You’ll have to back up a few verses from what I just read. You see, the woman with the bleeding problem interrupted Jesus as he was headed to heal someone else.

In verses 20-22 Jesus healed the bleeding woman. Just before that, Jesus was giving a lesson on fasting.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 9:18-19

While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.” ¹⁹ *Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.*

EXPLANATION: The synagogue leader must have known about Jesus. The news about Jesus was spreading quickly in a society with no phones, no internet, and no newspaper.

But the man had to be careful. The religious elite did not like Jesus. If he palled around with Jesus, he might lose his job. I mean, here was Jesus, who did everything differently. He was unconventional. He even broke Sabbath laws. As a synagogue leader, this man was supposed to protect Sabbath laws.

ILLUSTRATION: I’ve learned that when you’re really desperate, you’ll do whatever it takes. Once I had a friend who complained about chronic back trouble. I recommended my chiropractor and then heard about how he did not believe in chiropractors. I said, “Then you really don’t have the back pain that I have had.” I had another friend who told me about his wife’s back pain. I recommended my chiropractor. He told his wife, and they went to see him.

EXPLANATION: The synagogue leader was desperate. Yesterday he might not have paid any attention to Jesus. But today was a whole different story. Today, he had to have help. His daughter had died. She was too young to die. Desperate, he sought out Jesus. And Jesus, who was teaching, just “*got up and went with him.*” On that day, not just any day, but the day in which a synagogue leader was experiencing extreme grief, this father became Jesus’ *one*.

We don’t know his name. Another nameless person in the Gospel of Matthew known only as a leader in the synagogue whose daughter had died.

4-THE GIRL JESUS BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 9:23-26

When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, ²⁴ he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. ²⁵ After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. ²⁶ News of this spread through all that region.

EXPLANATION: You can imagine the picture. Isn’t it great that we have imagination? A noisy crowd had gathered, there was some kind of music playing, and in walks this guy telling them to get lost, the girl is not dead.

My thought is that, even though they were not in the modern world with fancy medical equipment, they knew death when they saw it. She was dead. Who knows how long she had been dead? They knew the difference between sleep and death. They would have determined that her body was cold, that she was not sleeping, that her heart was not beating. She was gone.

But the healer said she was sleeping. He liked to say that because to him, death is nothing more than sleep. He has power over death. The crowd that laughed at him would, before long, witness that fact.

Sometimes crowds can carry wisdom. We sometimes default to what the crowd says because the majority must be right. But in this case, Jesus ignored the majority and declared that her death was merely sleep.

On that day many years ago, in the middle of a loud crowd with music playing and people mourning, the girl who was dead was Jesus' *one*. Matthew does not tell us her name. We only know her as the girl who was brought back to life.

5-THE MAN WITH THE SHRIVELED HAND

Turn to Matthew 12. Jesus had been in a grain field with his disciples on the Sabbath. I don't know what grain was around them, but it was edible in its raw form. Some of the disciples ate the grain and the You Know Who got all fired up and pointed out that it was against the law to harvest on the Sabbath. Jesus shot right back with Old Testament stories they would have known.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 12:9-14

Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, ¹⁰ and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

¹¹ He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

¹³ Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. ¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

EXPLANATION: Those guys were rascals for sure. Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath, and they immediately plotted how they might kill him. So ridiculous. But that's not what today's message is about.

Here we have another unnamed person. Jesus was having so much fun healing people that he did not even wait for the man to ask to be healed. *“Stretch out your hand.”*

Here was a crippled man. The religious elite around him had likely already decided his hand was shriveled because of a sin his parents had committed, or because of a sin he had committed, or because God had just willed it to be so. They regarded themselves higher than the crippled man and believed that, if he were going to be healed, that he and Jesus should wait until the Sabbath was over.

You see, there was no rule that said someone could not be healed on the Sabbath. The religious elite had never seen anyone miraculously healed before because this was all new anyway. They tried to tag Jesus with working on the Sabbath stating that picking crops was work, and Jesus pushed back. Now they determined that healing someone was work and since it was unlawful to work, *he had better not heal on the Sabbath!*

“Stretch out your hand.”

On that Sabbath day, many years ago, that man was Jesus’ *one*. We don’t know his name. We only know him as the man with the shriveled hand.

CONCLUSION: On purpose, I picked anonymous individuals to demonstrate to you the importance of *one*. The stories of all these nameless people made their way into the Holy Bible so that people throughout the rest of history could read about them.

All of these stories were about healing, and yes, I believe that Jesus can heal today. I do believe that. I part with those who say the days of miraculous healing are over. All of these people had incurable diseases: the man with leprosy, the woman with the chronic bleeding problem for twelve years, the synagogue leader and his daughter who was dead, and the man with the shriveled hand.

While I believe Jesus can heal, I want to tell you loud and clear this morning that the greatest healing is spiritual healing. I’m not promoting yoga, meditation, or anything like that. The spiritual healing we all need is through the saving power of

Jesus Christ. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

I picked unnamed people because those unnamed people might represent you. You might feel lost in the crowd. You may feel that no one knows you, that no one cares about you.

But look, in each of these stories, Jesus was in a crowd, yet he stopped for the *one*. Jesus knows all about you. He wants to be your Savior. He's reaching out to you today. Won't you call to him? Won't you let him heal your wounded soul? Won't you let him come in?

You are the *one* and through the crowd, he is seeking you out.

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