

HOW CAN A SINNER APPROACH THE LORD IN ORDER TO OBTAIN MERCY?

MATTHEW 8:1-4 • TV121A

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By

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Matthew 8:1-4

“When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”

Turn today to the book of **Matthew**. My subject today is: **“HOW CAN A SINNER APPROACH THE LORD IN ORDER TO OBTAIN MERCY?”**

Now, that’s an interesting subject and I think it concerns everyone listening to this program today: **“HOW CAN A SINNER APPROACH THE LORD IN ORDER TO OBTAIN MERCY?”**

I am reading from the **book of Matthew, chapter 8, verses 1 through 3**. Will you open your Bible and follow along with me as I read the Scripture?

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It says in **Matthew 8:1**: *“When he was come down from the mountain; (we are talking about the Lord Jesus Christ now, our Saviour and our Lord) when he was come down from the mountain great multitudes followed him and behold there came a leper.”*

Here is a man diseased and dying, a man who had leprosy and he worshipped Him and he said: *“Lord if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him saying: I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”*

Now, I’m not sure that the number of times that a truth appears in the Scripture has anything to do with the importance of it. But, this particular incident appears in God’s Word three times. Matthew records it, Mark records it, and Luke records it.

So, I believe it’s important for our edification: *“Our Lord came down from the mountain and a great multitude of people followed him and behold, (look with attention), a leper came and fell down and worshipped him and he cried: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”*

Now, I would say this: the manner in which this man, this needy creature, this diseased person, the manner in which he approached the Master, is an example to be followed by everyone who would seek His grace and seek His mercy.

For example: If you are a lost person and you are listening to this program today and your sins are very heavy upon your heart and your sins are very heavy upon your conscience and you can say as the Master said, “I am weary and heavy laden. I’m weary with sin and I’m burdened down with my conscience, with my past and yea with my present. I want my sins to be pardoned. I want God to have mercy and grace upon my soul.” Then I would say: this is the way to approach Christ, just like this man came: come to Christ as he came.

He needed help; he needed cleansing as you need cleansing. And he came to the Master and he was cleansed. So, we are going to look at the way in which he came, for an example!

Suppose you are a believer and you are going through a great trial and great affliction. You feel that the hand of God is heavy upon you like Job, like many of these men and women of the Old Testament and the New Testament; the hand of God, the hand of trial and the hand of affliction is heavy upon you.

Some of you out there are going through great trials and you need comfort and you need strength and you need God’s grace, like the apostle Paul who had the thorn in the flesh and came three times to the Lord seeking relief and had God say to him: *“my grace is sufficient.”*

But, he received an audience. He had communion with God and he received an answer and you want an answer and you want grace and help. Well, how should you approach Christ? I would say approach Christ as this man approached the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Suppose you are a sick person. Our God heals, we know that. All healing is of the Lord. He said: *“I am the Lord who healeth all thy diseases.”* And you are bowed down with some infirmity, with some great sickness, and you want healing; how shall you approach the Lord?

“There’s healing in his wings. His arm is not heavy that he cannot save. His ear is not heavy that he cannot hear.” There’s power in the Lord.

How shall you approach the Lord? I would say as this man approached the Lord. We are going to look at that in a few moments; how did he come to Christ in order to obtain mercy?

Suppose you are unsettled and an unsure person in regard to your interest in Christ, you’re just not certain of your eternal well-being. You’re just not certain of your relationship with Christ. You are filled with doubts and fears like John Newton who wrote:

**“Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I’m found
I was blind but now I do see.”**

He’s the same man who wrote this song:

**“Tis a point I long to know
And oft it gives me anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his or am I not?”**

And you are going through that same time of doubt and fear and you need to come to the Lord in a sweet communion and fellowship. How do you approach the Lord? Well, let me say this, all things are in Christ.

That’s what you’ve got to decide first of all, what is the source of your health? What is the source of grace? All things are in Christ. God has vested everything in Christ, not in the church, not in the law, not even in the Bible, but in Christ.

He is able, not only willing to meet your need, *“for he is plenteous in mercy. He delights to show mercy.”* But, our God is able. Listen to some of these Scriptures:

“He is able to perform all that he promised.” The Lord hath said, *“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee so that I can boldly say: the Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man can do. He’s able to perform all that he promised.”*

Listen to this Scripture: *“He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him.”* How about this Scripture, *“He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.”* Or this one, *“He is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless before his presence with exceeding glory and exceeding joy.”*

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How about this one? *“He is able to raise our vile bodies and make them just like his glorious body.”* So, Christ is the source of help. He is the source of comfort. He is the source of all grace and He is the source of all mercy. It is all in Him, *“Of God, Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”* To the guilty He says, *“Thy sins be forgiven thee.”*

And to the lame He says: *“Take up thy bed and walk.”* To the hungry, the gracious invitation, *“Come and dine. All things are prepared; all things are ready; come and dine.”*

To the weary He says: *“I will give you rest”* and to the thirsty, *“ho everyone that thirsteth; come to the water. Come without money or price and buy milk and wine.”*

To the lonely, He says: *“I am with you always, even to the end of the earth.”* To the poor our Lord says: *“All things are yours. All things are in Christ and Christ is yours.”*

To the orphan He says: *“I go to my Father and to your Father.”* And to the captive He says: *“If the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed.”* To the blind, *“Look and live.”* To the helpless, *“My grace is sufficient.”*

And to the dead: *“Come forth.”* As He stood before the grave of Lazarus on that morning and said: *“Lazarus come forth”* and he would have been dead for four days, yet he walked out of the tomb. And one day *“all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth.”*

David wrote in **Psalm 103**: *“Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thy sins, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth our mouth with good things.”*

My friend, all things are in Christ. Everything that the sinner needs, here and throughout eternity, is found in the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture says: *“In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in him.”*

All right preacher, I'm sure of that, everything's in Christ, the beloved, eternal, infinite, unchangeable Son of God, of whom the prophet wrote: *“He's the same yesterday, today, and forever.”*

“But, how do I, a sinner, approach the living Lord? I want you to talk to me in plain language. I want you to talk to me in the language of this day. I want you to tell me and I don't want to put on a show and I don't want to be a hypocrite and I don't want to talk the stereotype language of religion.”

“I want you to tell me how a poor sinner can approach a full Saviour, how an empty sinner can approach a full Saviour and be received and find mercy and grace to help in time of need?”

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All right; there are five words in this text, would you remember the text? Let's look at it again in **Matthew 8: 1 through 3**; it says: *"Behold, there came a leper and fell down and worshipped him saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."*

And our Lord said as He put forth his hand and touched him: *"I will; be thou clean."* I see five words, how to approach the Lord in order to obtain mercy!

First of all: The man worshipped!

Do you see that word worshipped? This man fell down and worshipped the Lord. He kneeled and worshipped the Lord. My friend; God is to be worshipped. I don't care who you are and I don't care what your problem is or what your condition is. I care not your age, your race, or your persuasion; God almighty is to be worshipped. He is to be worshipped by all creation and by all creatures. The last verse in the **Book of Psalms** says this: *"Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord."*

All the way through the Old Testament these words are written: *"O come let us worship God, let us bow down before the Lord our maker. The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth worship him."*

The first thing, if you are coming to God for anything, for comfort, mercy, grace, salvation, forgiveness, renewal, rejoicing and whatever; the place where you start is to worship God, to recognize that He is worthy to be worshipped.

He's worthy to be praised. He's worthy to be held in awe and fear and reverence. The Scripture says: *"Holy and reverend is his name. Let all the earth stand before him in awe and in fear."*

David said: *"Come my children; I will teach you how you are to fear the Lord. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord."* I'm not talking about a slavish fear; I am talking about reverence and awe and worship, to adore the Lord our God.

When Abraham was told by God to take his only son Isaac and sacrifice him on Mount Moriah as a sin-offering unto the Lord God, this man Abraham made that trip. It was a three day trip and for three days Abraham journeyed toward that mountain with his only son Isaac, the son of his love.

And when he neared the mountain the Scripture says: *"he looked up and saw the place."* And then he said to the young men with him: *you fellows stay here; the lad and I are going yonder and worship."*

Here was a man filled with great anguish, heavy hearted, battling his doubts and fears, not understanding the commandment of God, not understanding the ways of God, not understanding this awesome task that was before him.

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But, in the face of all of this great trial and affliction, and in the face of these doubts and fears, Abraham had one thing on his mind, he said: *“this lad and I are going yonder to worship God.”*

Whatever God has for me He is worthy to be worshipped. Whatever God intends for me, He is worthy to be worshipped. Whatever God in His good providence has brought into my life, He is worthy at all times to be worshipped.

Job was a man greatly afflicted. And here was Job as the messengers came in and told him that he had lost all of his cattle, all of his sheep and all of his oxen, that everything he owned had been swept away and yea, even his ten children had been slain and lay dead.

In the face of all this the Scripture says: *“Job did not charge God with foolishness”* but the Scripture says, *“he bowed down and worshipped.”* Do you see the significance here?

Our Lord came down from the mountain and here was a man in great need, in great anguish and pain, a leper, beyond help, beyond human help, beyond his own help.

And the first thing he did, he didn't rush up to the Lord and say: “Now you promised to heal and I claim your healing.” He went up to him and kneeled down before him and the Scripture says: *“he worshipped him.”*

Before he ever opened his mouth, he worshipped the Lord. Before he ever made a petition he worshipped the Lord. Before he ever asked for anything, he worshipped the Lord. And my friend, whatever your need, this is where you start: you must bow down and worship God.

Whatever the Lord is pleased to do with you or me, it will be right. *“Shall not the judge of the earth do right?”* God's too good to do wrong and too wise to make a mistake. There are to be no arguments before the throne of God.

We are to be like our Lord Jesus Christ said as he lifted his eyes to heaven; *“Father I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and thou has revealed them unto babes: for even so Father, it seemed good in thy sight.”*

And there's no argument or debate or discussion to be put forth before the throne of God's grace. We are just to say: *“Lord; thy will be done.”* “We worship thee. Thou art God.”

Whatever happens, this man worshipped the Lord. He worshipped the Lord in his uncleanness. He worshipped the Lord in his weakness. He worshipped the Lord in his sickness. He worshipped the Lord in his need.

I don't know what the future holds for you. I don't know how to prepare you for the future but I do know this; I know who holds the future; it's in His hands. All things in the future are in the hands of God and the Scripture says; *“Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation and took on*

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himself the form of a servant and became obedient, (even unto death) even the death of the cross.” “Let this mind be in you,” bow down before the Lord our God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is to be worshipped. Mercy is in His hands. Grace is in His hands. He says: *“I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.”*

So, the first thing I would say in answer to the question: “how can a sinner, a needy, helpless, sinner approach the Lord of glory in order to obtain help or mercy and grace?” I would say start here: worship the Lord; bow down and worship the Lord.

I heard somebody say one time: “All Christians ought to worship God.” No my friend; all men ought to worship God, all men! God is worthy to be worshipped: *“Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.”*

Second: “How can a sinner approach the Lord in order to obtain mercy?” The second word in the text is the word **“Lord.”**

This man came and fell down, kneeled down at the feet of Christ and worshipped Him and he said: *“Lord;”* he recognized the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Scripture says: *“He died that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.”*

Christ is supreme, absolute, unchangeable Lord of heaven and earth. He said: *“All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth.”* He said, *“I have all power over all flesh.”*

Let me say this to you, the Bible knows nothing about “a doormat named Jesus.” It’s not in there anywhere. The Bible knows nothing about one who will be your Saviour and will not be your Lord. Christ is Lord. He said this to his disciples: *“You call me Lord and Master and you say well for so I am.”* He is Lord!

And Samuel, young Samuel, who was called to be a servant of God, a prophet of God, when young Samuel approached Eli to tell him about the judgment of God upon his home and upon himself and upon his family, God said he was going to kill Eli’s sons because of their great sins.

When Samuel presented that truth to Eli, what was Eli’s reply? He said: *“It’s the Lord; let him do what he will. It’s God; let him do what he will.”*

The thief on the cross, when he saw Christ, even in His saddest state, even in His state of humiliation, in His state of suffering, stripped naked before those people, dying on that tree, seemingly helpless, His visage marred as no other man, that thief recognized Christ’s Kingship and Lordship, he said: *“Lord; (you are not going to stay dead, you are coming into a kingdom) remember me Lord.”*

I will tell you this, what distresses me about today’s religion, what distresses me about today’s fundamentalism, is the low esteem and the pitiful opinion that they have of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Jesus Christ is not a pitiful reformer. He is not a frustrated, defeated, disillusioned and disappointed reformer; He's "*Lord of Lord's and King of Kings.*"

And when He died on that cross, He uttered these words: "*It is finished.*" He finished what He came to do. He accomplished what He was sent to do and He will not fail.

"*What think ye of Christ?*" Thomas said: "*My Lord and my God.*" The apostle Paul cried: "*Lord, what will you have me do?*"

So, that's the second thing. When you approach Christ Jesus, you worship and acknowledge His sovereignty, His Lordship, His power and right to do with His own what He will. God said: "*I am the potter and you are the clay. The potter hath power over the clay to make of the vessel a lump, whatever vessel he will.*"

Third: The third word is will!

This man came to Christ, worshipped Him, and said: "*Lord; if you will.*" Now, I know the whole religious world has been arguing and debating for centuries over the subject of the will.

They debate over man's will, free-will, and whosoever will, and God's will, and all of the other things. But let me tell you this, (I'm quite certain of this) I have not one doubt in my mind about it; I know whose will's going to be done. I know whose will's going to be done.

The Scripture says in **Ephesians chapter 1:11** and you can go on arguing and debating and quarreling and disputing all you want to, but I know whose will is going to be done. In **Ephesians 1:11**, it says: "*He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*"

Daniel 4 says: "*He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth.*"

And you who pray the Lord's Prayer or the model prayer: "*Our Father which art in heaven; (what does it say?) thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" His will shall be done. "*He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*"

Before our Lord ascended back to the Father He was talking to the disciples and He told Peter how he would die. He told Peter that he would be crucified upside down. It upset the apostle Peter and he turned and looked at John, the beloved disciple, and he said; "*Lord; what about this fellow, what's he going to do?*" The Lord Jesus said: "*Peter; if I will that he tarry until I come again what is that to thee, (if I will that he live on this earth until I come back again, that's none of your business you do what I told you to do) follow thou me.*" My friend, that's the Scripture, "*His will shall be done.*"

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Do you know what the essence of sin is? Do you know the essence of sin? Well, I know that we talk about sin or all of these outward things, you know, but sin is a principle. Sin is an attitude. Sin is a root within us; it's a nature.

A man steals because he is a thief. He doesn't become a thief when he steals. He was a thief before he ever stole. The nature was in him, the principle was in him, the root was there. A man's not a murderer because he killed somebody; he killed somebody because in that heart he's a murderer. That's where sin is.

The essence of sin is this, I will do what I will. I have no regard for God's will. I will do what I will. That's what Satan said in **Isaiah 14**, he says: *"I will be like God. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God."* That's our trouble. Sin is a nature, it's a root, I will.

Do you know the essence of holiness? It's God's will. The essence of holiness is not walking around with a silly smile on your face, the essence of holiness is not walking around with your hands clasped you know, and trying to look religious.

The essence of holiness is a principle in your heart that desires the will of God to be done, whatever that will is. That's what our Lord said in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said: *"Not my will but thy will be done."*

And this man said to Christ as he knelt at His feet: *"Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. It's not of him that willeth or him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy."*

And your salvation or comfort or healing is not in your hands or in anybody else's hands; it's in the Lord's hands. That brings us to the next word.

Fourth: *"Lord, if thou will, thou canst make me clean."*

Why can He? He can for three reasons. Our Lord is able. This man saw his inability to help himself or anybody else's ability to help him. He knew that the people around him couldn't help him. He couldn't help himself.

This leper was without strength, without hope, and without help. But, he said: *"Lord, you can do it."* Why can Christ save a sinner? Why can Christ forgive sin? Why can he put away sin?

First: Because of whom He is; He's God! *"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."* Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, that's who He is. God said: *"This is my Son in whom I'm well pleased."* He's not just a messenger from heaven; He's the Lord from heaven; the second Adam is the Lord from heaven. He's not just a religious martyr; Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God. He is the sacrifice for sin and He can heal us because of who He is. He can save us because of who He is.

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Secondly: He can save us and heal us and help us because of where He is! Do you know where He is? He's at the right hand of the Father that's the place of acceptance, that's the place of power, that's the place of authority. He's on the right hand of God.

Thirdly: He can help us and He claims us because of what he did! He died for our sins, He died for our sins. In other words, we have righteousness; it's not ours. We have holiness; it's not ours. We would be the first to say with the apostle Paul: *"I'm the chief of sinners. I'm less than the least of all the saints. In my flesh dwelleth no good thing."*

But Christ is my righteousness. He obeyed the law in my stead, in my place. He went to the cross and took my guilt, shame, filth, and death and died that I might be reconciled to God.

The man worshipped the Lord. He recognized the sovereignty and Lordship of Christ. He recognized the will but his cleansing was according to the will of God and he recognized that Christ could do it, not only was willing to do it, but could do it because of who He was.

Fifth: the leper said: "I want to be clean."

Now, I know there are a lot of people; what's my real need? I know there is a lot of emphasis in religion today on "God wants you to be rich." I don't need to be rich. I think riches sometime are a great burden.

I don't need to be popular and have a lot of friends. I enjoy friends but that is not my need. I don't need fine clothes and big homes and fine cars. I don't even need good health, but I do need my sins forgiven. I need to be clean. *"Who shall stand in his presence: he that hath clean hands and a pure heart?"* I need to be clean with this leprosy of sin.

The leper said: *"Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."* He wasn't interested in stylish clothes. He wasn't interested in wealth. He wasn't even interested in food; he was interested in being made clean and that's what we've got to be interested in, in being made clean.

Our Lord said: *"I will; be thou clean."*