

# After the Amen (1): Desperate Faith

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(Matthew 8:5-13)

## I. Introduction

- A. **Old Joke:** Guy comes very late and asks an usher, “*So how long has he been preaching*”
1. Usher whispers, “*About 40 years.*” Guy says, “*Surely he must be almost finished!*”
  2. We’ve all been there, right? Sermon’s gone on long enough and it’s time to move on.
    - a. Guy in Grandmother’s church pound pocket watch on pew back if things got long!
    - b. Sometimes its just time for sermon to be over, right? (*After all, today’s the playoffs*)
- B. But what comes next? What comes after the amen when the service is finally over?
1. Our real problem with sermons isn’t that they’re too long but too short in our memory
    - a. We never really get around to doing anything about putting them into practice
    - b. Lou Holtz is quoted as saying, “*When all is said and done, more is said than done*”
  2. **James:** that’s not how it’s supposed to be! (**Jam 1:22**). *That’s deceiving ourselves!*
    - a. You go to church to hear the word preached and think you’ve done your duty
    - b. OK, sometimes suffering through the sermons feels like suffering for Jesus...
  3. The word is a mirror. Can look in mirror and forget what you see (**Jam 1:23-24**)
    - a. **Modern Update:** Ever look at cell to see the time and forget to notice time?
    - b. The reason you look in the mirror is if your going to fix anything that is
      - 1) Is something caught in my teeth? Is my hair more or less in place?
      - 2) If you’re not going to make changes, why look in a mirror in the first place?
  4. Same with scripture; the reason to read it or listen to it is to follow it (**James 1:25**)
    - a. “*The truth will set you free*” sure, but only if you’re willing put it into practice!
    - b. It’s really isn’t enough to know the truth, you must be willing to do something
- C. Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with parable of the two builders (**Matt 7:24-27**)
1. Both hear word and face the storms/floods—wise builder “*puts them into practice*”
    - a. His building (life) stands the test of time because he is applying Jesus words
    - b. The life of the other falls apart because though he heard Jesus, he didn’t obey
  2. Everyone thought Jesus’ sermon was amazing, fantastic, two thumbs up (**Mt 7:28-29**)
    - a. They’d only **heard** the sermon, right? Weren’t turning other cheek, going extra mile
    - b. Only person who launched into immediate action after sermon was Jesus himself!
  3. What see over the next 4 weeks is what Jesus does “*After the Amen*” in **Matthew 8-9**

## II. Desperate Faith: THEN

- A. After the Sermon on the Mount (“*After the Amen*”), Jesus deals with a series of outcasts
1. **First**, there is a leper comes to Jesus with straightforward request (**Matt 8:2-3**)
    - a. The man expresses faith in Jesus, “*Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean*”
    - b. Jesus responds in a non-dramatic, straightforward way, “*I am willing. Be clean*”
  2. **Question**: Was leper driven by rational, reasoned faith from what heard in sermon?
    - a. Or is this the desperate faith of someone who realizes he has nowhere else to go?
    - b. As we’ll see, Jesus had reputation of a healer as well as being authoritative speaker
    - c. Does the leper come to Jesus because if you’re a leper, then where else will you go?
- B. **Second**, centurion is from opposite end of social spectrum (**Reading: Matthew 8:5-10**)
1. He’s an officer and a gentleman, but he’s still an outcast because he’s Gentile
    - a. Luke tells us the Jews respected him, but he’s never going to be accepted by them
    - b. Centurion comes to Jesus because he has a servant who is paralyzed and is suffering
      - 1) “*Servant*” is the word for “*child*.” Luke uses word “*doulos*.” Idea is “*my boy*”
      - 2) There’s a great deal of affection; this isn’t a financial concern that drives him
    - c. There is no doubt why he would come to Jesus with this problem (**Matt 4:24**)
      - 1) Not only did Jesus have the reputation as a healer—he healed paralyzed people
      - 2) When came to Capernaum where this guy could pull strings, he pulled strings
  2. After all, he was an important man, but he shows great deference to Jesus here
    - a. In Luke’s version, the Centurion doesn’t even bother Jesus personally (**Luke 7:3-4**)
      - 1) Did centurion not want to risk Jesus’ reputation rubbing elbows with Gentile?
      - 2) Did he have a better shot going through intermediaries in Jewish community?
    - b. It didn’t really matter he was a Gentile; he wasn’t personally worthy to host Jesus
      - 1) More to the point, it wasn’t necessary for Jesus to come all the way to house
      - 2) He believes Jesus can give the order that servant will be healed (**Matt 8:8**)
      - 3) He’s used to both giving and following orders; Jesus can just give the order
  3. Jesus is good at reading people and looking into hearts— he isn’t easily surprised
    - a. But here he is genuinely surprised (**Matt 8:10**). Message has him “*taken aback*”
    - b. Only other time this word is used of Jesus is over a LACK of faith (**Mark 6:5-6**)
    - c. Gentile’s total trust in Jesus contrasts with his own’s people’s total lack of trust
  4. The centurion comes to Jesus because he believes only Jesus has the power to heal

### III. Desperate Faith: NOW

- A. I think there more to this healing story than just Jesus' power to heal disease
1. Jesus does say the word and the servant is healed (**Matt 8:13**). There's more here
    - a. In the next chapter, Jesus is going to heal a lame man— good news for him
    - b. He's clear there that he is pointing to much more than power to heal (**Matt 9:6**)
  2. Jesus' teachable moment here is about salvation, not physical healing (**Matt 8:11-12**)
    - a. Every person that Jesus healed in the gospels have two things in common
      - 1) They were instantly, completely healed—lame walk, blind see, deaf hear, etc.
      - 2) They later got old and die—their healing was complete but only temporary!
    - b. Jesus mission on earth was not ultimately to heal people of all their diseases
    - c. His mission was to heal us from the disease than claims us all—sin
  3. That's what he is talking about here, right? Who is at the table of God and who isn't
    - a. A leper had first come, driven by a desperate faith— and was healed. At the table
    - b. A Gentile had come, also driven by desperate faith—received healing. At the table.
      - 1) Very ones the Jewish leaders were sure would not be at the table... at the table
      - 2) Who were “*subjects of the kingdom*” who were left with no place at the table?
- B. On the surface, this leper and this centurion had very little in common... like nothing!
1. They're on the opposite end of power spectrum—one had no power, the other had lots
    - a. Leper was an outcast, doomed to living outside the village shouting, “Unclean!”
      - 1) Well, he had power to get attention! People scattered to hear him coming!
      - 2) He didn't have hope... until he heard of a rabbi with the authority over disease
    - b. Centurion had a lot of power, right? That was the very point he made to Jesus
      - 1) Oh, he could build synagogues, but he was not welcome to worship in them
      - 2) He might be seen as a friend of Jews, but would never be accepted by them
  2. Leper had no power himself; centurion set aside all the power he had in himself
    - a. They turned to Jesus in a desperate faith for only Jesus had the power to heal them
    - b. We can be healed by Jesus if we come to have that kind of desperate faith in Him
- C. We all come with certain pride in who are and what we've done. *That's OK; just lose it!*
1. We must come to grips with Isaiah's rags (**Isa 64:6**) and Paul's garbage (**Phil 3:8-9**)
  2. We're sick and dying; there's nothing we can do about it... except come to Jesus
  3. We must believe—and it must a truly desperate faith. Our only hope is in Jesus!