

Jesus and the Powerless

1. Introduction

- Two weeks ago I had my first Scripture lesson with my Kindy class
- 18 little kids who are cute and keen
- And one thing I have learnt over the years I have taught Kindy SRE is that they often come to scripture knowing very little or nothing about God or Jesus or the Bible
- I was speaking to these Kindy kids about God
 - Went to read from the Bible
 - Showed them the Bible and said the Bible is where we learn all about God and Jesus
- One of the kids sits bolt upright with this shocked look on his face and says
 - "Jesus, I thought that was a swear word!"
- For many people, Jesus is a swear word ...
 - But as we're learning as we work our way through Matt 8-10 ... Jesus is so much more
 - And the key theme of Matt 8-10 is that Jesus is not a swear word
 - But as you can see in the slide ... that Jesus is the king of God's kingdom who has come with all power and authority to usher in the kingdom of heaven
- And our passage this morning highlights to us that as God's king ...
 - Jesus comes into a world that is broken and fallen and messed up ...
 - He comes to people in this messed up world who are in pain and anguish and distress and powerless to change it
 - And Jesus comes and shows he has the power to make a difference
 - He has the power to over the brokenness of this world and people's lives and bring healing, hope and salvation
- So Jesus is much more than a swear word
- What we'll see in these verses this morning is ...
 - The power of Jesus to restore cannot be denied
 - The credentials of Jesus to reign cannot be ignored
 - The challenge of Jesus to respond cannot be avoided

2. Context

- Jesus has just been telling those around him that
 - New age has come

- The King has arrived
- That as the bridegroom he come to gather his bride
- It's time to issue invitations to the wedding feast

- While he was saying these things a ruler came up to Jesus and implored him to come and restore his dead daughter back to life
 - And what follows are four amazing miracles of healing and restoration that Jesus does that continue to shed light on who Jesus is and why he came

3. The power of Jesus to restore cannot be denied

- The first restoration happens when 'a ruler' comes to Jesus and says his daughter is dead ... "come and put your hand on her and she will live"
 - We know from Mark & Luke's gospels that this man was Jairus¹ - the synagogue ruler in Capernaum
 - Which means he was a man of influence and means
- No doubt therefore, he would've had all the paediatric specialists from Prince of Wales come to his house to treat his daughter
 - He would've tried all the medications and treatments they prescribed
 - Yet no matter what he did for his daughter ... he was utterly powerless to overcome the ravages of death
 - And so he turns to Jesus
- Of course he would've heard much about Jesus and his power to heal and restore
 - Capernaum was where Jesus lived most of his time in Galilee
 - He knows Jesus can restore his girl and in faith he goes to him pleads for Jesus to restore her back to life

- Jesus agrees to go and on the way he encounters another person who's life is in ruins because of the brokenness and fallen-ness of this world
- We're told in v20 that the woman had been subject to bleeding
 - Under the Law, a woman was considered ceremonially unclean while she was bleeding and was required to remain isolated until it had finished
 - For this poor woman, her bleeding hadn't stopped for 12 years!
 - Which would have made her life utterly wretched
 - She would've suffered the humiliation, distress and intrusion
 - seeing many doctors
 - spending all her money

¹ Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41

- receiving no effective treatment
- left with no hope or resolution
- In addition
 - She would've been shunned by her entire community
 - She would've never marry able to marry
 - It happened after she married, she almost certainly would've been divorced
 - She wouldn't have been able to have children
 - She would've been forced to remain isolated from everyone because she and anything she touched was ceremonially unclean
- There was nothing that the world, the medical profession or the religious establishment could offer her to heal her or restore her
 - Yet Jesus banishes her sickness and restores her – whole and clean
- The story of the bleeding woman in the middle of Jesus encounter with Jairus and his daughter is meant to point the ruler and us to see how Jesus can transform despair into hope and salvation
- And that's exactly what we see
- When Jesus gets to the ruler's house its clear to everyone his daughter is dead
 - The musicians and mourners had arrived to grieve with the family
 - The crowd laughs at Jesus when he suggests she is only sleeping
- But for Jesus ... the king of God's kingdom who has all power and authority ... to raise this girl from the dead is as simple for a waking someone from their sleep
 - He goes in > takes the girl by the hand and she got up
 - Jesus restores her from death to life
- Then in quick succession, Matthew records how Jesus goes on to restore the sight of two blind men and then not long after that he heals a man who is mute
- And what's clear in each of these four episodes Jesus power to restore the sick, the broken and even the dead ... cannot be denied
- Look at the reaction of those who witnessed it
 - v26 – after Jesus raised the ruler's daughter back to life ... news of this spread through all the region
 - v31 – after Jesus healed the blind men ... they went out and spread the news about him all over that region

- v33 – after Jesus healed the demon possessed man ... the crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."
- Clearly, it was obvious to everyone who witnessed each of these miracles ... that Jesus had power and authority to restore life and heal people of their brokenness

- Even the **enemies** of Jesus were acknowledging the things that Jesus was doing
- Have a look at v34
 - *But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."*
- Even Jesus enemies were unable to deny the miracles that Jesus was doing
 - If they had a chance to deny it, they would've
 - If they had the chance to say he was a fraud they would have
 - But they didn't ... because the truth was seen by all, including them
 - And so all they are left with is name calling
 - And saying that what Jesus is doing can't be of God ... so it must be of the devil

- **Application**
- The Scottish philosopher David Hume was known as the father of Empiricism
 - That is ... only things that can that can be supported with empirical evidence are true
 - As a result he was renowned for his scepticism of Christianity and in particular, Jesus miracles ... because according to his worldview there was no way to quantify and verify them
- His sceptical way of thinking has hugely influenced our modern worldview
 - As such many modern people are all too willing to deny the historicity of Jesus and the miracles of Jesus
- Many think that because we live in this post-Enlightenment world we know better than those of the 1st century
 - That we're more sophisticated and educated and therefore we're in a better position to judge the truth of what **really** happened 2000 years ago
 - Which is extremely arrogant

- And so the atheists and sceptics and liberal scholars will explain away Jesus miracles as
 - figments of the imagination of those who were there

- elaborate stories that grew over time
- And they seek to revise the truth of history to suit what they want to believe

- But even the enemies acknowledge Jesus did these things ...
- So how can we or anyone else 2000 years later claim to know better now ...
 - It's like saying in 100 years time that Queensland never won 9 State of Origins in a row
 - Or the atrocities of Auschwitz never happened
 - It would be a complete rewrite of history to do so
- But everyone accepted and acknowledged the power of Jesus to restore the sick, broken and dead > it could not be denied

- The power of Jesus to restore cannot be denied
 - Would you examine the truth?
 - Would you examine it?
 - Nobody there at the time would deny it!
 - Therefore if you're a thinking person ... it bears investigating

4. The credentials of Jesus to reign cannot be ignored

- The bundling these four miracles together, Matthew the theologian ... is trying to teach us something
- He is teaching us that this Jesus who has the power to restore
 - Life to the dead
 - Health to the sick
 - Sight to the blind
- He's showing us ... very clearly that Jesus Christ is God's long promised Messiah / King who has come to reign
- We see this become clear in 11:2ff
 - *Matthew 11:2-5* ² *When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples* ³ *to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"* ⁴ *Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*

- Now why does John the Baptist send his disciples to ask that of Jesus?
 - It's because Israel had, up until that time, been eagerly awaiting the arrival of God's promised Messiah and king

- Many sections of the OT scriptures pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah and with him ... the promised kingdom of heaven
- One of those passages is Isaiah 35:4-6
 - *"Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.*
- You see, John the Baptist heard all that Jesus was doing ...
 - Raising the dead, healing the leper and the blind and the lame and the mute
 - He put two and two together ... and realised ... that Jesus was in fact the Messiah
 - And Jesus confirms it to him by quoting Isaiah 35
 - I am the Christ
 - I am the one to come
 - I am the one who will usher in and reign over God's eternal kingdom²
- It's God's king ... the Messiah who is the only one who can truly overcome brokenness of this world and people's lives that they are otherwise powerless to do
- Look at Jairus
 - A ruler in the synagogue > no doubt he was very religious and devout
 - Yet his religious fervour and devotion was not enough to overcome the death of daughter
- The OT Law branded the bleeding woman as unclean and demanded she be excluded from God's presence and her community
 - The Law was powerless to do anything other than condemn her to that existence
- No amount of medical expertise was able to restore the sight of the blind men
 - No remedy, no operation, no treatment could overcome their blindness
- For the man who was mute ... captured by spiritual forces of darkness ... there was no ritual, prayer, exorcism or pagan rite that could make him whole again
- They show us the hopeless and helpless condition of humanity apart from the intervention of Jesus

² Also the reference of the blind men to Jesus as the Son of David, a messianic title (refer 2 Samuel 7:11-13)

- All of them were powerless to overcome their brokenness
 - No religion, no Law, no man- treatment, no spiritual remedy could overcome it
- And yet along comes Jesus
 - God's promised rescuing king who has all power and authority
 - And proves he is the one who will reign over God's eternal kingdom
 - And with a word and with a touch he restores their lives
 - He shows he is the one with power to restore the brokenness of this world like no one or nothing else can
- **Application**
- The human secularists will tell you that through education we can become a better society
- Politicians tells you that through policy reform we can build a better future
- Religion tells you that if you obey the law and follow the 5 pillars and deny yourself ... then life will turn out okay
- But this passage shows us that the brokenness of this world cannot be overcome by our own intervention
 - No amount of religious obedience
 - No amount of political reform
 - No amount of humanistic philosophies ... can fix the problem
- Because the underlying problem with the brokenness of the world is sin
 - And the Bible tells us that the root of all sin is the heart
 - And so we're powerless to overcome the brokenness of the world ... unless we can deal the brokenness of our hearts
- Now, I want to clarify that the brokenness and pain you and I experience is not necessarily a direct result of our own sin
 - It might be ... but often it's not
 - Cancer, blindness, illness isn't necessarily because a person sins more than others
 - Rather, the existence of sin in the world has this effect on us
- Like when a room is filled with light and then the light turns off
 - Everything in that exists in that room is covered by darkness
 - The darkness can't be escaped
- Sin covers every aspect of this world ... and we experience the effects of it constantly
- As we see Jesus engaging with the brokenness of the world we see that unlike us, Jesus has the power to overcome it

- He undoes the effects of sin
- He brings change to an otherwise unchangeable world
- He defeats the result of sin

- Ultimately we see him defeat sin altogether
 - In Jesus death on the cross, sin is defeated
 - And so at the cross he heals the brokenness of the world through taking out its source – sin
 - The rotten roots of the tree that causes all the brokenness in our world and in our lives, are dug up and destroyed

- And so, through Jesus victory on the cross, his kingdom is inaugurated
 - A kingdom where sin and all its effects no longer exist
 - It's that kingdom that we live in anticipation of

- The message from Jesus encounters with the brokenness of this world is not that we should expect things to be healed completely now ...
 - Rather that Jesus interactions with our brokenness reveal to us his power over them and what his eternal kingdom will be like when he returns

- And so friends ... when you're confronted with the brokenness of this world in your own life ... who or what are your going to turn to?
 - Politicians?
 - Other religions?
 - Philosophy?
 - Yourself?
 - Because if you do ... you will soon find out that
 - they can't help you
 - because they can't fix the root of the problem
 - and therefore they offer no hope or solution

- But if you come to Jesus ... you come to one who you know who has already fixed the problem for you at the cross

5. The challenge of Jesus to respond cannot be avoided

- Which brings us to our last point
- If Christ can deal with the brokenness of this world and your life ... what are you going to do about it?
- Because what we see in these verses is a challenge from Jesus cannot be avoided

- And we see that in the way each of the groups respond in faith as a reasoned response to the clear revelation of the truth of Jesus
- The ones who reject Jesus in v34 do so as an irrational, unreasoned, inexplicable response to Jesus and resort to playground name calling
- The Pharisees abandon reason!
 - How can they ignore the one who has bought life to the dead, health to the sick and sight to the blind and conclude that he's on the devils side?!
- They're so determined to get away from the truth about Jesus they resort to name calling and unreason

- But the ruler, the woman, the blind men, the friends of the demon-possessed man ... they thought it through
 - It's not blind faith either
 - In each case ... they applied reason, they were rational and thought-out
 - Weighed up the revelation of Jesus and take action

- You see, Christian faith is not a leap in the dark
 - We're not left guessing as to who God is and what he has done for us
 - Nor has he left us guess on how we are to respond to him
- Sometimes people say to me
 - "I wish I had your faith"
 - As though it's something magical ...
 - As though it's something unattainable by some ... but magically conjured up in others with no logical basis to it
- But that's not we see here in Matt 9
 - True faith comes from observing the facts about Jesus
 - Of looking at the revelation of Jesus and making an informed decision

- Throughout Matt 8-10 we see all sorts of faith
 - Weak faith, strong faith, confident faith, superstitious faith, doubting faith
 - Jesus accepts all who accept him and reach out to him ... however small that faith is ... he accepts them
- Because it's faith in God's promised Messiah
 - The one who has all power and authority to overcome the brokenness of this world and deal with root cause of it ... your sin and mine
 - Who by conquering sin and death through his own death ushers in a heavenly kingdom where that brokenness will be no more
 - And when you trust that this is who Jesus is and what he can do ...
 - Then you get to be part of that

- You get to be healed
- You get to be restore
- You get to be saved
- For faith the basis of you being part of God's eternal kingdom
- And we need to ask ourselves ... have we responded to Jesus in this way or not?
 - Evidence is here ... you can't deny it
 - Even his worst enemies wouldn't deny it
- And so the challenge is unavoidable ... will you respond as the Pharisees in unreason or will you respond in faith
- When it comes to the brokenness of this world and our lives ...
 - The good news of Jesus doesn't just make difference for the future
 - The gospel makes a difference now
- And that's because the gospel creates brings together a group of people who recognise that we are all broken and all in desperate need of Jesus
 - So when we gather around Jesus we are not gathering as people who are perfect and have our lives working wonderfully
 - We gather as people desperately in need of the gospel
- This means three things
- Firstly, the gospel means we welcome your brokenness
 - Come to church in your good times ... and come to church in your broken times
 - Come to church when your kids are well behaved ... and come to church when they're not
 - In fact come because they aren't ... so we can tell them the gospel
 - Come to church when your life is going well ... and come to church when your life is falling apart and you just want to collapse in a chair and cry
 - We welcome your brokenness because we're broken too
 - We can sit together and cry together over the brokenness we experience together
 - If you think you need to be perfect to come to church then we have failed you
- Secondly, we will pray together in your brokenness
 - When we get together we pray for each other because we know the only solution to the problems of this world is Jesus

- Prayer is an mark of our dependence ... a cry of help ... a recognition of the source of healing to the broken
- We get together and pray for each other's burdens and sufferings
- We pray that God would work in us in the here and now knowing he works for the good of those who love him
- We pray together that God would change us as we gather together to confess our sins to God ... knowing that we have been forgiven

- Finally, we give thanks to God together for the better future to come
 - We come in our brokenness and we celebrate the future to come
 - We celebrate the end where there is no more sin or evil or pain
 - The future to come where all brokenness is healed
 - Where all things come good
 - We celebrate the good news of Jesus
 - God's promised king ... who has all power and authority
 - Who has conquered sin and death
 - And ushers in his good and perfect eternal kingdom

PRAY