

Matthew 8:1-27

As we move out of the sermon, we need to regain our bearings on this gospel letter. In Matthew 1-4 he shows us that the Messiah has come. And His name is Jesus. We see His genealogy, birth story, baptism, overcoming temptation in the wilderness, and beginning of His ministry. Main big idea, the Divine King is here in the person of Jesus.

Then we see the summary of Jesus ministry...

4:23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

We see His teaching in Chapters 5-7, Jesus goes up a mountain, in parallel fashion to Moses going up the Mount of Sinai, to deliver a new law to the new people of God. He's not abandoning the law, He's fulfilling it, deepening it. As He finishes the teaching at the end of chapter 7, the crowds are astonished at his teaching, dumbfounded, because He's teaching them as one who had authority.

And when He comes down from the mountain in chapter 8 Matthew is still concerned with this issue of authority. We've seen His authority in powerful teaching, and now we are going to see His authority in powerful deeds.

Chapters 8 and 9 form one complete section to showcase the authority of Jesus. We will see His authority over Disease, Disciples, Disaster, Demons, Sin, Salvation, Death, Disability, and the Devil.

We are breaking up this section into 3 sermons. This morning we will look at Jesus' authority over disease, His disciples, and disaster.

So this morning we are shifting gears. We are moving from a sermon of Jesus, very line by line, looking at the law, to picking back up with a narrative focus. We try to make the main point of the text the main point of the sermon. So when we get back into narrative, we will be covering more territory, trying to align ourselves with what Matthew is doing driven by the Holy Spirit. And we'd like to finish this book before 2020.

I like how David Platt summarizes these chapters. **Jesus possesses absolute authority in the world and warrants absolute allegiance from the world.** - Platt

The question on the table for all of us is who do we believe Jesus is? What sort of authority does He have? And is that authority worth submitting to? That's what authority is getting at. And if we acknowledge Jesus, we then have a response to make. Worship. Trust. Submission. Joy.

We don't tend to like authority. We don't like people telling us what to do. Maybe this idea of Jesus' authority sets you on edge. But the truth is we only have problems with authority when that authority is set against us. Like our parents or the government. What I hope this morning that we will see is that Jesus is for us, and because He is in a place of authority, He is to be worship and adored. When we properly see Him, our wills respond with eagerness.

Let's pray.

1. **Jesus has authority over disease** We see three miracle stories of Jesus authority over disease.

1. Leper - Jesus cleanses the physically unclean (outline from Platt*)

8:1 When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. 2 And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." 3 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

Lepers were considered unclean in both a physical and spiritual sense. This was the most feared disease. No known cure. This condition attacks the nervous system, you lose the ability to feel your body, and therefore sense pain, and so what happens is you stop being able to feel your limbs, infection happens, everything degenerates and becomes deformed, once it takes over your limbs can fall off. They were going to die a slow, painful death.

On the ceremonial side, for the Old Testament Jews, this physical illness represented spiritual matters. Those with leprosy were considered cursed by God. They were not allowed in the camp. They had to be outside the social life of the community. Quarantined away. If they did come near, they'd have to call out, "unclean, unclean" so that no one would touch them and become unclean themselves. It was a very serious deal.

So when this leper comes close to Jesus, behold, everyone is watching with great suspense. What is going to happen? You don't go near a leper and lepers don't come near to you. It's like oil and water, the two don't mix.

What is beautiful here is the leper's faith. Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. He says, Lord. He believes in who Jesus is, the sovereign King of the universe. That's not in question, its implicit within his plea. The question is, Lord, are you willing? He's saying, I know you are powerful enough, but are you willing enough?

And listen to how Jesus responds. V.3 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will, be clean." This moment is beautiful, and its filled with the heart of God. See Jesus' compassion. He didn't need to touch him, we will see in the next miracle that Jesus is powerful enough to heal by word only, and touching a leper is enough to defile oneself. So Jesus, filled with love and compassion, reaches across this barrier to do what no man would do, touching the leper in all of his filth. Jesus touches the filthy.

And what happens? The unclean are made clean. Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Jesus did not Himself become unclean. The unclean became clean. Why? Because Jesus stands in authority over uncleanness, over leprosy.

And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

It's kind of weird to hear Jesus say, don't tell anyone about what happened. Well what Jesus is doing is that He is staying true to His mission. He knows He came to serve and to die, not to become miracle worker, not to draw crowds. He didn't want them to make Him into their King.

Jesus cleanses the ceremonially unclean, next we see that He...

2. Centurion - Jesus heals the ethnically outcast

5 When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, 6 "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." 7 And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8 But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 10 When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Here we have another healing miracle, this time to the ethnically outcast. leper excluded from condition, centurion excluded from race. God's peopler are the Jews. There is a massive gap between them and the rest of the world, the gentiles. Enemies. Centurions were Roman officers. Not only is this centurion a gentile, he is ruling over the Jews. The Jews are in roman occupied territory.

We see this centurion's faith, again, approaching Jesus because He believes something about Jesus. This is the guy that can do something about my problem. Lord, my servant is paralyzed at home. Jesus responds with radical grace, "I will come and heal him." It was against the law for a Jew to enter the home of a Gentile, and yet here we see Jesus being willing to go.

The centurion then shows great humility, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof. and faith in Jesus ability, Lord all you need to do is say the word.

His argument to Jesus is one from his own experience. In the army, I'm under authority, I'm under Rome, so when I speak, I speak in the authority of the one who I am connected to, when I speak, Rome speaks, the emperor speaks, so people do what I say. This centurion knows that Jesus operates the same way, He is in a place of authority. When He speaks God speaks, when He does, God does, and everything obeys. Just say the word and it will be done.

It is this faith that it says Jesus marveled at. "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith." Jesus takes advantage of what is happening as a "teachable moment." This is what we as parents and disciple-makers are always having in view... teachable moments. Jesus turns to the crowd, v.11 "I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This is astounding. Heaven is for those who believe in Jesus, have faith in Jesus. It's a faith that is for anyone who believes. You can't be born into this kingdom by physical birth, you must be born spiritually. What we see here is that Jesus is on a global mission. He is not a tribal deity. He wants all people, from every tribe and tongue and nation. this was the plan from the beginning. To redeem the whole world.

And I love the picture of heaven here. Reclining at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That's good. It's actually a picture of the Messianic banquet. It's a party. Think about the best meals you ever had, they involved two essential ingredients. Good food, and good fellowship. In heaven, we will have good food and good fellowship to the max. All that is required is faith, and that faith is available for all people. Racial identity gets you no where.

And 13. to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

No potions, no magic formula, no healing ritual or ceremony, just, go, just a word, from a distance... and immediately the servant is healed. Jesus has authority over paralysis.

Jesus cleanses the ceremonially unclean, He heals the ethnically outcast, and he restores the culturally marginalized.

3. Peter's Mother-In-Law - Jesus restores the culturally marginalized

14 And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. 15 He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him.

Peter's mother-in-law is sick with a fever. Again we see the authority of Jesus combined with radical grace. It was against practice to touch someone with a fever, and against tradition to show such love and care to women. Jesus goes straight in, touches her hand, He of course didn't have to, and the fever leaves. Jesus has authority over fevers. To show how complete a healing it was, she just gets up and starts serving Jesus some cheese and figs.

We've seen three displays of Jesus authority, then Matthew gives a summary statement, **16 That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."**

Matthew takes these stories of Jesus authority to heal, and ties them directly to Scripture, saying this all happened as a fulfillment of what was prophesied by Isaiah. Now what's interesting about this passage is that the quote is from the suffering servant, Isaiah 53, which is clearly a prophecy about Christ's death on the cross, dying for sinners. So why and how does Matthew tie healing of diseases with a cross that's for sin?

We have to go back to the beginning. All the suffering that you and I and this world experiences comes into existence on the backside of sin. Sin is what unleashed suffering in humanity. The cross brings physical healing because the cross removes the sin that caused it in the first place. The point of the healings is to show that the person who is healing has authority to deal with sin. And dealing with sin in the cross, He will restore our physical bodies as well.

People take this verse and end up on one of two extremes. Some take it to mean the cross has secured everyone's healing, you just need to believe (never God's fault, always your lack of faith or sin). The other camp says the cross brings healing, but only in heaven. Where both are right, is that God is for healing. But they are both wrong in how to view healing in the here and now.

Is it God's will that you are healed of cancer? Yes!! Is it God's will that it happens today, tomorrow, or even in this lifetime? I don't know. The Scriptures, to be balanced, present a reality that some are healed and some are not. This ultimately resting on God's sovereign will. All signs of healing now, whether miraculous or normal means, are signs of the coming kingdom when God will grant us all resurrected bodies.

The deeper issue is our hearts. You can't get a resurrected body until you have repentance in your heart.

Maybe that's you this morning. Feeling unworthy, ashamed, dirty, on the outside looking in, a little less than others, Jesus is here for you this morning. You are who He has come for. He hasn't come for the religious ones who have it all together, He's come for the outsider, the sinner, who knows they need Him.

Jesus has authority over disciples

18 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. 19 And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 21 Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 22 And Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

We see two people that Jesus interacts here, both making the point that Jesus demands absolute allegiance, even if it requires great personal cost. The first is a scribe. He's hot out the gate... teacher, i will follow you wherever you go. I'm ready, I got my bags packed, let's do this.

Jesus, knowing this dudes heart, goes straight in, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

The flavor of the way Jesus responds is that Jesus exposes this guys blindspot. He might say he wants to go everywhere Jesus wants to go, but is he really there. Is it just speak. Jesus is not after speak, He's after action. So He points to His own homelessness. The point is not that every disciple should be homeless, but that nothing can be in the way. This guy may have been thinking he was going to ride Jesus' coattails, maybe he thought Jesus was going to be the ticket to a life of security and physical blessings.

Jesus does the very same thing with the next disciple. **"Lord," he says, "let me first go and bury my father." 22 And Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."**

We don't know whether this guy's dad has already died or is soon to die, but what is clear is that there is a devotion to his father that Jesus sees as a rivalry to following Him. It's delayed obedience. Delayed obedience is disobedience. I don't think I fully understood that till now that I have 3 kids 4 and under. I'll just say this, immediate obedience is one of the most glorious things in the world. You're trying to get out of the house, you tell one of the girls to go get their shoes on, When it takes you 30 minutes to get out of the house. (A little bit of

birth control for you newly weds) The guy has some work he's got to do, then he will follow. It's a good thing for him to want to be there with the family, so Jesus is not against that.

The issue is rivaled affections. The first is "too quick in promising. the second is too slow in performing." - Carson. Neither we see are fit to be true disciples because there are things in their heart preventing them from actually following Jesus.

We talk a lot about grace because the Bible centers on the grace that is in Jesus christ in the gospel message, that's absolutely central. But maybe in our desire and fear not to fall into legalism, we don't ask enough of people. Our cost in following Jesus is never to earn salvation, its a cost that we spend because of His great worth. It's lived out as worship. The apostle Paul says we are to be living sacrifices on the altar. Dead to ourselves in worship of Christ. Jesus is not after followers here, he's trying to make it hard. What has the church done, we've made it easy.

What's your idol? What stands in between you and following Jesus with all of your heart? Is it a location, a type of people, security or comfort, a sin habit, addiction. What is your greatest love? That thing that you would give anything to have or you have it and fear losing it.

We are so often comfort chasers, chasing whats comfortable to ourselves, not what's conforming to Christ. Even in the joy there is a crucified self beneath. What stands in the way between you and following Jesus—that's what Jesus is after. And that's what we need to be repenting of. That is our allegiance. That is our authority. We must repent and put Jesus on the throne.

Jesus has authority over disaster

23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. 25 And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." 26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 27 And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

In this last story the disciples, many of them fisherman, so they know their stuff, they are rough dudes, they aren't amateurs. they know what life on the water is all about, This massive storm comes rushing in and the boat was taking a beating by the waves, water pouring over. And these guys are terrified, in anguish. Literally think they are going to die. They've come to the end of their resources, their strength and wisdom has been exhausted, so they turn outside themselves to the One who they think can help them.

And He's asleep. Imagine that moment. And they wake him up, save us Lord, we are perishing. But instead of answering their prayer, Jesus rebukes them. Why are you afraid. O you of little faith?

Little faith about what? You would think they did what they were supposed to... They went to Jesus to calm the storm. They had faith that Jesus could do something about the storm. So what was the problem? Jesus tells us, why are you afraid? Their fear was the problem.

So their faith needed strengthening. Jesus gets up and rebukes the winds and the sea and this crazy storm is hushed. Great calm. At that the disciples marvel. What sort of man is this, even the winds obey him? That question gets at the driving point of the story. What sort of man is this? Why would they ask that? Because thats what God does. Throughout the Scriptures it is God who calms storms. Psalm 89:9, "You rule the raging sea when its waves surge, You still them." Psalm 107, "He stilled the storm to a murmur, and the waves of the sea were hushed." What kind of man is this?

What they are marveling at, is this man in the boat with them is not just man, He's God. That changes things. Only God has authority over the winds and the waves. God Himself is in this boat. God is with us in the storm. That's why we don't need to be afraid. However scary your storm is, let your trust be greater. Rejoice in the storm... suffering is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.

We have no right to take this text and make bold promises about how God is going to calm every storm in this life. He certainly has the power to calm storms, but just like in healing, its not guaranteed. In Heaven it's guaranteed.

If you are walking through something and you are afraid, Jesus is with you. He is God. He has authority over that storm, so you do not need to fear. Satan will not win. Trust God. He's good. He's sovereign. He's using your storm for His good purposes and your eternal joy.

Conclusion

Jesus has authority of disease, disciples, and disasters. We see a glorious picture of Jesus and His work in the gospel through these stories.

We are the unclean, distant from God, and marginalized. But In the cross Jesus becomes all that it means to become unclean, distant from God, and marginalized for our sake. He died outside the city gates, as the refuse of the world, as a criminal, in the place of sinners, in order to bring us near to God.

We are the idolaters who don't give Jesus our allegiance. But In the cross Jesus lays down His authority to become the servant of all, paying the penalty for the idolater so that we can be forgiven and made righteous.

We deserve the eternal wrath of God. but In the cross Jesus does not rebuke the storm of God's wrath, but willingly entered into the fullness of its fury, so that we wouldn't have to, and gives us perfect peace in his presence forever.

This is Jesus. He possesses all the authority in the universe. And He is full of love and grace. How can we not then willingly give Him our full allegiance?

Let's pray.