

Week 8

Matthew series: Jesus is

Matthew 8: The Power of God

Some times in the Bible we get these bridges. They are places where the story transitions to a new place. Sometimes it a thought and other times its to another place like across the river. I feel the end of Matthew 7 is just like the end of Judges 21:25 **“In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.”** Matthew 7: 28-29 **“Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.”** It’s the same thing. The understanding and teaching in Judges was lost by the end of it. Matthew is saying that the teachers of God had lost their way. Why? Because Jesus has taught deeply about God, kingdom, and heaven for three chapters and the people we astounded. Where has your understanding of God been and what has astounded you recently?

Matthew 8:8 **“he centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.”**

Exodus 3:5 **“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”**

Matthew 7 ends with transition just like using the words therefore, however, and furthermore. Jesus has talked a big talk. It is now time to transform that talk into action. Some of the worst parts of Christianity is the action. We talk big from the pulpit but we do very little in terms of action. Jesus was never like that. Matthew recognizes that Jesus was not like that. Matthew is all about teaching, application, and examples of themes. Matthew 8 begins the application part. Jesus is putting the power of God on display. The first two sections do it so well. Jesus heals a leper who is weak. Jesus helps a centurion who is humbled. The beatitudes are on full display in Matthew 8. Is the reason you were never a Christian before was because of the actions of the church or inaction?

Matthew 8:14-15 **“Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever. 15 So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.”**

Matthew 5:14 **“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.”**

Verse 21 of Matthew 7 makes me laugh. **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”** There is more to Jesus pointing out the word “Lord”, but can you notice that everyone close to Jesus calls him Lord from that moment on. It is interesting that Judas never calls Jesus Lord, but “Master.” Matthew 8 has several instances of calling Jesus Lord. I think that means something for you and me. Jesus is the Lord of heaven, our hearts, and this creation. In Matthew 8 Jesus is Lord over deadly disease (leper), time (centurion), earth (storm), and evil (demons). Matthew 8 puts on the full display the dominion and power of Jesus. Usually that’s all we hear about, yet Jesus has compassion touching a leper, compassion healing a centurion’s boy, and compassion for the spiritually infected. God is on display as doing everything the church of that day would not do in the name of God.

There is one other theme weaving through this chapter. Would God come down to earth to be with the people. It is one thing to say the kingdom is near and another to be near. Again, it is Jesus doing what he claimed God the Father is. It says in verse 1 that Jesus came down the mountain. In Exodus Moses went up the mountain to God. It says Moses came down the mountain, not God. Here in Matthew it is Jesus going up and down. In verse 3 Jesus says “I chose.” To the leper, Jesus acknowledges the church as being relevant and honoring by sending him there. He tells one boy that following God has a price. Jesus has no fear over storms or calamity. Jesus is not afraid of the devil. The God who came down is the same God who did not fear Egypt and Pharaoh. The kingdom is being established by Jesus in Matthew 8.

Matthew 8:1 **“When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.”**

Exodus 34:29 **“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.”**

Read Matthew 5 and then Matthew 8 and see the relationship between talk and actions. Check out Exodus 34 for extra reading if you have time.

1. It is amazing to me that doing a miracle is not the point to Jesus. Matthew could have built a case for his readers to be impressed with miracles. However, Matthew and Jesus get the point of miracles. The point is that people meet God where they are. I feel the biggest fault of church (not really a fault) is that they do the very opposite of Jesus. People come to church to be saved. People come to church for healing or prayer. Church never ventures to where the sick, lame, or outcast are. Jesus runs ministry in a different way. Jesus touches the leper, He praises the centurion, and he is in the middle of the storm. Realize Jesus is putting the “Kingdom is near” into action.

Matthew 8:3 **“He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”**

Exodus 13:21 **“By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.**

2. Matthew 8:14-22 paints a picture of Jesus living the kingdom. I find it interesting that the people who died and were raised from the dead were hungry and began doing things right away. Peter’s mother began to serve Jesus right after resurrection. This is totally cool. The second thing is the dead burying their own dead. I have seen several takes on this scripture. I feel it leans towards kingdom work. Jesus has just said he has no house and no homeland here on earth. He is here to preach the kingdom. Doing life here was not his mission. Kingdom work is also for the saved. If your saved, then death has little meaning. There is an afterlife. The dead burying the dead is a shot at the unsaved. They are the condemned, the walking dead.

One minor note. It is places like Matthew 8 where some have ruined the Christian life. Throughout history some believers have tried to segregate themselves from the world. They have been the likes of Amish, monks, and priests. There are probably more like cults. These people and groups segregate themselves from the world because the world is evil. As a new believer, it is so important to be mindful of the world. I get it. Yet, Jesus went straight into the world. He showed up in all the dirty places and met all the outcast people. If Matthew could tell you one thing it would be that God brought the kingdom into the darkness to show the light. We must never forget that.

Matthew 8:22 **“But Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”**

Genesis 3:8 **“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.**

3. To have the greatest faith is to be calm in a storm. It’s possible that only Jesus had that faith because he was God. There is so much to be learned from this little episode. Paul the Apostle may be the only other because he did not panic in a storm either. Jesus here in Matthew 8 is asleep. Just let that sink in. That boat was probably being tossed about pretty good. Remember these guys were fisherman. They had seen it all on the waters. For them to panic was something bad.

Realize that Jesus wakes up and is annoyed that they disturbed him. It’s not implying that we can annoy God, but rather that the message of the kingdom does not sink in our thick heads. I believe Jesus was annoyed that the disciples did not pray first, they panicked first. With all the miracles and teaching these men were still amazed by Jesus abilities. I don’t think, to this point, the disciples got Jesus and God at all. If God shows us plainly and we still don’t get it, that could be annoying.

Matthew 8:26 **“And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm.”**

Exodus 32:10-11 **“Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.” Then Moses entreated the LORD his**

God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

4. In this last part of Matthew 8 I find it curious. The demons ask if Jesus has come to kill them before the time. What time? The New testament claims the time of the kingdom is near or at hand. Yet, the coming kingdom is different. In those days, Jesus, will toast demons and all that is unholy. In this day, Jesus is all about preparing for the way of the Lord. Jesus is continuing what John the Baptist started. It's interesting the demons know the end is coming. They know their fate. How clever of them to ask for compassion by Jesus. Jesus is clever. He helps the demons and does not kill them, yet verses later they entered pigs and are drowned. Did the demons die?

This is interesting stuff. I find it interesting the demons did not or could not run away. They were in the men. Jesus was able to place them in the pigs. Apparently, the pigs did not like this and freaked out and drowned in the water. In Jewish tradition, they do not eat pork. It is obvious that they did eat pork. Secondly the people were ticked that Jesus had killed their herd. Ah, God is to blame for doing what should not have been done. We hear that story all the time. Again, Matthew is pointing out a theme of Jesus: talk and actions.

Matthew 8: 34 "Then the whole town came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood."

Deuteronomy 14:8 "The pig is also unclean; although it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses."

What does it mean?

It means we are to move. Matthew 28:19 says "go." In many, many verses Jesus said "go" forth, home, to people, and several other ways. We are never commanded to sit still. God at times says wait or be patient. That is true. Yet, God always says before or after those statements to "go." Take the land. Take your mat. Speak to the world. To the ends of the earth. Ironically, Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit are not about conquest. God could have taken Satan and the world anytime he chose.

In the Old Testament God asks the Israelites to not mix yeast in the bread. There are many reasons for this. This yeast represents staying still. Giving Satan time for a foothold. Being still to let yeast rise. Imagine God asking them to move. Imagine the people saying "wait my yeast is rising." It's symbolic to the core. When we wait, we think. When we stand still, nothing gets done. We get comfortable. The Christian life is not supposed to be comfortable. That is why Jesus said he has to place for his head to rest. Why he said pick up your mat. Why he asked us to go.

Don't rest on understanding, there is more to learn. Don't rest on our accomplishments, there is more to do. Don't rest on accepting the norm. Accepting what the world believes. The world does. The world wants. God is always moving. God is always on the go just as Jesus asks people to go. This chapter is about conquest through action. The yeast point is this chapter. Be the yeast that affects the world. The yeast that helps make people rise in the name of God. That is what this chapter means.

Matthew 8:32 **“And He said to them, “Go.” So, when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine.”**

Psalms 105:4 **“Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.”**