

Week 9

Matthew series: Jesus is

Matthew 9: The Spiritual of God

It's tough to write exactly what the Bible is trying to say. I have said before that there are so many different sermons on any verse or chapter in the Bible. Teaching Matthew is ridiculous. It is too big, deep, and vast. Yet, here we are. The other day I heard two different things. One was, to know Jesus is to know the Father in Heaven. Secondly, to know that Father is to know the Old Testament. There is great truth in both of those statements. In many ways, I am in that camp. The other side is to know God is to know Jesus. It's kind of the chicken and egg thing. I suspect that some people have had a spiritual moment when it becomes clear. Who teaches us God first: Jesus or God. Who teaches you about God?

Matthew 9:4-5 "But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?"

2 Kings 22:8 "Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord."

Matthew 9 begins like so many chapters do. It says Jesus went from one place to another. In chapter 8 it begins with Jesus coming down the mountain. In this chapter, Jesus crosses water. If you think of Moses, then you might see what Matthew is trying to do. Moses came down a mountain and crossed water too. Moses was tempted in the desert and so was Jesus. Matthew says Jesus was in the wilderness (desert) for 40 days. Moses was in the desert 40 years. To know something of Jesus we need to read Moses. To know Jesus is to know the God of the Old Testament. To know God is to read Matthew and see how the God of old is the same old God in the New Testament: Jesus. Can you begin to see the Old God and new God as the same?

Matthew 9:23-24 "When Jesus came into the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, 24 He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him."

Genesis 50:20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."

I feel this chapter continues this little theme of revealing God. It also has a mini theme in itself. Jesus is all about the spiritual. He prays to the Father. Jesus performs miracles. Yet, there is something about the spiritual that runs deeper. In this chapter, we see Jesus knowing people's hearts. He heals from a distance. In a way, this is the monkey that covers his eyes, mouth, and ears in reverse. He helps one see. He helps one speak, and they accuse him of speaking blasphemy. Jesus is opening ears too. All of this to me is the spiritual world bursting forth in our world and causing mayhem.

If you take a good look at this chapter you will see that Jesus is making statements. He is calling Matthew. Matthew is a dirty despised tax collector. He is healing the dregs of society like the blind and lame. Then at the end of this chapter Jesus says he came to be a doctor for the sick, not the healthy. He desires mercy not sacrifice. Finally, Jesus says there is plenty of need in this world but the workers to help those in need are few. Spiritually speaking this world is sick. We are in the same place today. We look down on the less fortunate. We promote sacrifice but we have little mercy. Sacrifice means self-promotion in this world. Mercy is compassion and self-sacrifice. To say Jesus shows us the way is hollow. To read Jesus doing what he claims is full of hope and truth.

Matthew 9:13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, [b]to repentance."

1 Kings 17:21-22 "Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." 22 And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived."

Read this chapter and think about what Jesus is doing to promote the kingdom. Check out 1 kings 17 for extra reading

1. Let's look at Matthew 9 as mini themes. The first comes in the form of statements. Jesus is saying that God is here for a purpose. So often people say why did God not save them. Why did God kill that person? Why did God allow this to happen? They miss the point of God. Look at Jesus says in:

9:5 **"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'?"**

9:13 **"Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."**

9:37 **"Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few."**

Throughout this chapter, we see Jesus doing what can't be done. The religious leaders are pestering him the whole time. They say you can't, you should not, and you are of the devil. Just think about that. Would the devil really heal, help, and promote God? This chapter is insanity. Jesus is here to promote the kingdom. He came to display the kingdom. It is amazing that those who said they knew God could not see God right before their eyes. Jesus is also calling all to join the kingdom. The day and age of Jesus was about segregation and not community. Jesus came to bust that up and create a community of God for all people.

Matthew 9:34 **“But the Pharisees said, “By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons.”**

Numbers 22:23 **“When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road.”**

2. Jesus can promote the kingdom by displaying the kingdom power. Right away Jesus comes into this chapter looking at the religious rulers squarely in the face in a stare down. There is no soft, fluffy backdown from a meek and weak Jesus. He tells the paralytic man to get up and walk. That is amazing but who cares. However, these rulers do care if Jesus adds that the man’s sins are forgiven. In those days, to say that means you claim to be God. That was blasphemy. Jesus says he desires mercy over sacrifice. Don’t miss the sacrifice part. That is a God thing. Jesus broke tradition on fasting. He raised a girl from the dead. He challenged the blind men by asking them if they believed he could heal them. He then cast out demons. The power of God was on fully display in chapter 9.

Matthew 9:29 **“Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you.”**

1 Kings 18:38 **“Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.”**

3. Romans 10:14 says **“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”** Why does Paul say this? I believe it is because he heard the stories of Jesus. Paul never directly met Jesus while he was on earth. Paul met him as the spirit Jesus. My point is that Paul heard so Paul preached. Matthew 9 shows us this concept. The people experienced God through Jesus. I suppose we could say they experienced the kingdom. It’s back to the monkey: see Jesus, hear Jesus, and watch Jesus do.

A paralytic man experienced Jesus and was healed. It says the crowds saw this and were in awe. Jesus asks a tax collector to follow him as the religious rulers bash him for doing so. John the Baptists disciples notice that Jesus does not require fasting. Geesh, a leader of the church came to him for help. A lady sees Jesus and figures that she could be healed just by touching him. He then went into a house and raised a girl from the dead and reports rang out of this in the district. Two blind men are healed and then spread the miracle. This is a whirl wind of chaos as Jesus opens the mouth of a mute and casts out demons. The religious leaders are angry and the crowds amazed. The crowds grew in equal proportion to the hatred against him. This is Jesus displaying the kingdom experience.

Matthew 9:33 **“And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, “Never has anything like this been seen in Israel.”**

Romans 8:38-39 **“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39] Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

4. Matthew 9:37-38 **“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”** I am serious that this is the crescendo of this chapter. Do those who dare to claim they are Christians truly want to be exactly like Jesus? Do you? This life of Christianity is not supposed to be nice, joy filled, comfy, and peaceful. Matthew has made it clear that Jesus is proclaiming that he is the Christ. Who is that? The Old testament told us. Jesus mentioned several times that the people did not listen to the prophets whom God sent. That included John the Baptist.

What does it mean to be Christian? Just take a look at Jesus life in chapter 9: It is awesome, scary, peril less, chaotic, and never ending. Oh, this is Jesus ministry. Is it? To follow Jesus is to go like Jesus and spread the kingdom here on earth. How does Jesus prayer go in Matthew 6? **“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’** If Jesus is God on earth in full display, then his will should be done on earth through whom? Aren’t we calling ourselves (Christ)ians? I want you to know that since the beginning of the Old Testament God was on display. Jesus came to be God on display. The Holy Spirit residing in us is the kingdom of God on display. Matthew is not just a fluffy history account with lofty words to spout to unbelievers. It is a declaration that the kingdom is near in who? In Jesus himself by the things he said and did and through his followers.

Matthew 9:9 **“As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.”**

Job 37:5 **“God’s voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding.”**

What does this mean?

I don’t want to show you the kingdom that I know and then warn you it sucks. However, I equally don’t want to sell you a false bill of goods. The Christian life is more than prayer, miracles, and spiritual blessings. It is more than community. It is more than joy, contentment, and hope. Yes, certainly these things are in the Christian life. The words persecution, hardship, and disappointment are in this life too. Satan does not want you to follow Jesus. Some people prefer Satan over God. It’s just that way on this earth.

With that said, Matthew 9 is a fun chapter. My Christian walk has been about an amazing rollercoaster of emotions. I’ve witnessed strange events and deep spiritual awakenings. I have been despised, hated, and mocked because of my faith. Yet, here I stand as a God follower. A Jesus follower. I am always wondering what next. My life is not boring with God. You could say it peels back layers of me like an onion. You could also say it adds layers of who Jesus and God the Father are.

I know denominations that took the words by Jesus literally to “Go.” They believe they can hasten Jesus return by spreading the news overseas. At home, they are on a money raising mission to save the world. It looks so good. However, they have failed to grow Christians at home. The church is struggling in society. Why? To be Christian is to listen to God where we

stand. Sometimes it's to go and other times it is to dwell right where we are. Matthew 9 screams that God's work is needed all over the place. It's time you joined the chaos.

Matthew 9:35 "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness."

Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."