

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

September 29, 2024

I. Introduction

A. I believe that Matthew, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, wrote his gospel with specific purposes in mind, and one of those purposes was to give us a comprehensive understanding of who Jesus is, where He came from, what He did, what He taught, and how His life on earth ended – so that we would believe in Him, and so that we could discover and discern how we should than live.

1. Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy, the story of His birth, the visit by the Magi, the flight to Egypt, the ministry of John the Baptist – which includes John's baptism of Jesus, the devil's three temptations of Jesus, the selection of Peter, Andrew, James and John as disciples, and the early days of Jesus' ministry.
2. In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew gives us a foundational view of Jesus' teachings, which when rightly understood, not only sets the course for how we should live, but gives us the basis for understanding the rest of Jesus' teachings presented in Matthew.
3. In **Matthew 8-9**, Matthew presents examples of Jesus' dealings with people, and these stories help us understand His ministry, His servant mindset, His humility, His compassion, His power over our bodies, natural events, and demons, and who He came to save – all of which are intended to give us real-life reasons to trust Him with our well-being, and examples of the thinking, attitudes, and behavior we can have toward life's situations and the people around us.
4. Today, we will begin working our way through these two chapters. As we do, I will read and comment on each story as we come to it.

B. Pray

II. Examples of Jesus' dealings with people that reveal His mindset and the scope of His ministry

A. **Matthew 8:1-4** (*an untouchable Jew*), When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. [2] And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." [3] Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. [4] And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself

to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

1. Though large crowds were following Jesus, Matthew uses Jesus’ interaction with individuals to show us His fearlessness, power, compassion, tenderness, and humility – making these interactions the reason we should trust Him and live accordingly.
2. According to the OT Law (**Leviticus 13:45-46, Numbers 5:1-4**), lepers were considered religiously unclean, and a health threat to the rest of the community. Therefore, they were to be isolated from the rest of the community. Touching a leper made you religiously unclean and required isolation until you went through the purification process.
3. At that time, there was no known cure for leprosy. Jesus’ healing power would have been a leper’s only hope. This leper boldly walked up to Jesus, and humbly, yet confidently told Jesus He could heal him if He would.
4. In touching the leper, Jesus showed His fearlessness toward the disease, and His tenderness toward the leper.
5. Finally, Jesus was not looking for fame or honor, but rather that the religious leaders would see in the leper’s healing that God was present and active in Israel, and respond by giving God the honor He was due.

B. **Matthew 8:5-13 (a Gentile/Roman military leader)**, And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, [6] and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented.” [7] Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” [8] But the centurion said, “Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. [9] For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” [10] Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. [11] I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; [12] but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” [13] And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed that very moment.

1. The centurion was a Gentile and a Roman Army Commander serving as a member of Rome’s occupying forces oppressing Israel. Yet Jesus dealt with him as if he was a neighbor.

2. The centurion came to Jesus and implored Him (*a form of earnest and urgent begging*) to heal his servant who was paralyzed and tormented (*by pain*). In other words, the centurion did not come on his own behalf, but on behalf of his servant – which indicates love and compassion, unexpected qualities in an unbelieving superior toward an inferior.
3. When Jesus agreed to go to the centurion’s home, he humbled himself (*as opposed to taking the conqueror’s superior attitude*) by acknowledging that he was unworthy of having Jesus in his home, and that Jesus could command a healing from a distance – just like he could command his soldiers from a distance and they would do as he said.
4. What stands out the most in this story is that the centurion believed Jesus was not acting on His own, but was under a superior’s authority just like himself, and that it was the superior’s authority (*God*) which gave Jesus the authority to do what He did, just as the centurion’s superiors gave him authority and backed up his authority so he could to do what he was sent to do.
5. Therefore, it was the centurion’s understanding and belief that Jesus was not acting on His own – that His power and authority came from someone over Him, that Jesus commended. And it was this understanding and belief which Jesus referred to when He warned His fellow Jews of eternal condemnation for not seeing and believing that He was sent and empowered by God – which was something that should have been obvious to the Jews, especially the religious leaders.
6. Finally, Matthew uses this story to show us that from the earliest part of Jesus ministry, Gentiles were to be included, and that **many** Gentiles would come to faith and be given eternal life.

C. **Matthew 8:14-15, (*Peter’s mother-in-law*)** When Jesus came into Peter’s home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. [15] He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him.

1. Notice the physical touch by Jesus. He didn’t do this every time, but He did it with the leper and here with Peter’s mother-in-law. Touching her was possibly a to communicate comfort and compassion.

D. **Matthew 8:16-17, (*healing the demon-possessed*)** When evening came, they brought to Him **many** who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. [17] This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: “He himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases.”

1. In Israel and the surrounding areas, demon-possession was a serious problem. It is interesting to me that many of those who Jesus healed from demon-possession showed signs of mental illness.
 - a. Though I cannot prove this, and am not saying it has to be true, I do wonder if many, or at least some of those in our own country who display forms of mental illness are in this condition because of demon-possession.
 - b. I also wonder if the number of people dealing with depression is a result of demon activity – and if our commitment to medicating the depressed hides, and therefore blinds us to its true source.
2. **Vs 17** is an example of Matthew’s commitment to show us that there are OT prophecies that are relevant to life today.
 - a. **Isaiah 53:4-5**, Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [5] But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.
 - b. Notice the price Jesus paid to bring us the kind of healing that, in a sinful world, is able to heal our soul, heart, mind, and body. He may heal with a touch or a word, but He heals because He was willing to be stricken, smitten, pierced through, crushed, and scourged on our behalf.
 - c. What price are we willing to pay to bring the healing power of the word of God, faith in God, and submission to God to those in need of spiritual healing?

E. **Matthew 8:18**, (*moving away from the crowds*) Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea.

1. According to my understanding of God and the ministry of Jesus, Matthew includes this statement to show that Jesus was more concerned about the quality of His followers than the quantity.
2. The point is, Jesus was not after crowds, but individuals who would believe in Him and His message, and then make a worthy effort to live accordingly.

F. **Matthew 8:19-22**, (*challenges of following Jesus*) Then a **scribe** came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” [20] Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” [22] Another of the

disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” [22] But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

1. This section takes place between the time Jesus gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea and when they finally got into the boat to leave. These two stories give us a sense of what is required to follow Jesus.
2. The **scribe** had noble ideas (*follow Jesus wherever He went, be a world changer, make a difference*). But was he willing to pay the price?
 - a. Jesus brought some reality to the scribes’ noble ideas by telling him that He, himself, had no home to go to at the end of a long day, or after being away for several weeks of dealing with needy people.
 - b. Imagine being on the front lines of serving needy people with no place to call your own where you could go to relax, recharge, enjoy some moments of peace, and do what you would like to do. That was the life Jesus lived for three years. Would you sign up for that? I’m not sure I would, because I like the quietness and comfort of home at the end of a long day.
3. The **disciple** was not asking to be released from his commitment to follow Jesus, but rather for time off to attend to earthly, more temporal matters.
 - a. Though showing respect for one’s parents is important and good, bringing the gospel to unbelievers in order to change their present way of life and eternal destiny is of such great importance to God and the people around them that giving attention to this need is to come first, not second or third.
 - b. Therefore, this is not about should we or shouldn’t we attend funerals, but about having a real and realistic understanding of priorities as a follower of Jesus Christ.
 - c. In a way, it is about who or what matters most: God or man, the eternal or the temporary, your good or my happiness?

G. **Matthew 8:23-27**, (*unnecessary fear*) 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 covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. [25] And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!” [26] He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea,

and it became perfectly calm. [27] The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

1. In healing the sick, Matthew presents Jesus as having power over our bodies in spite of their condition (*leprosy, paralyzed, fever, dead*).
2. In casting out demons, Matthew presents Jesus as having power over the spirit world – including the devil and his cohorts.
3. In stopping the storm and calming the sea, Matthew presents Jesus as having power over nature.
4. And though I believe God has the power to control our mind in order to make us think, believe, value, and choose what He deems we ought, He doesn’t do so.
 - a. We see this in Jesus’ dealing with the disciples’ fear of the storm and their projection of certain doom – based on what they were experiencing at the time.
 - b. The reality of the situation, according to Matthew’s account, is that the waves were washing over the boat – which infers water was coming into the boat. Yet Jesus was asleep – possibly because He knew He could not die until the cross, so why worry.
 - c. It is doubtful the disciples knew this, yet they had seen His power in healing the leper, the centurion’s servant, and Peter’s mother-in-law, and they could see Him sleeping soundly in spite of the howling storm and pounding waves. However, they at least knew who had the power to save them – and so they turned to Him.
 - d. But instead of taking control over their minds like He did with nature, He asked why they were afraid (*prompting them to think as opposed to reacting*), and He spoke honestly about their lack of faith (*prompting them to consider if what they claimed to believe was what they actually believed*).
5. It is of interest to me that in these two chapters, Jesus often points out He is responding to the faith of those asking for His help. Yet in this situation, Jesus responds to their plea for help in spite of their lack of faith. This is not a reason to justify or overlook unbelief, but it a reason to continue feeling safe in God’s hands even when our faith is weak or almost absent.

H. **Matthew 8:28-34**, (*two demon-possessed, violent men*) When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. [29] And they cried out, saying, “What business do we have with each other, Son

of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” [30] Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. [31] The demons began to entreat Him, saying, “If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.” [32] And He said to them, “Go!” And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters. [33] The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. [34] And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

1. These two men were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way – yet Jesus was there with them, and not afraid of them.
2. The demons were able to communicate with Jesus, they knew who He was (*Son of God*), they knew their freedom on earth would end one day (*before the time*), and they knew what their eternal destiny would be (*torment*).
 - a. In choosing the swine as their new home, they were securing a body to dwell in as opposed to being sent out of the bodies they were in and forced to wander in the empty spaces of the “heavenly places” (**Ephesians 6:12**).
 - b. In agreeing to send them into the swine, and then having the swine drown in the sea, it is understood by some that Jesus created a situation whereby these demons were trapped in lifeless bodies which, it is assumed, would prevent them from entering anyone else.
3. In sending the demons into the swine, we can conclude that Jesus values people, their salvation, and their spiritual well-being more than property or possessions. However, like so many, those who lost their property and a source of income or food valued what could do them good over doing good for others. They implored Jesus to go away.

III. Conclusion

- A. These are not just stories. They are pictures of Jesus that give us a fuller, more comprehensive understanding of His character, thinking, attitudes, submission to God, love for and compassion toward the needy, and honesty, yet patience with His disciples.
- B. May we learn from them what God wants to teach each of us about Himself, Jesus, ourselves, and how we should and can live as those who have been born again.