
Turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 8.

We pick up where we left off last week with Jesus beginning (once again) to perform miracles to authenticate to the people that He is indeed the Son of God. Jesus had just come off the mountainside where He preached the Sermon on the Mount...which was really the blueprint for His ministry and BANG...He's back at it again...performing miracle after miracle to prove that He was the Messiah.

Now I must tell you, as I prepared this week for today's message, I was stunned as I tried to place myself back in time 2000 years ago into the first century and what stunned and shocked me was just how much sickness and disease there was. In fact if you lived to be my age (almost 50), you were considered an old man.

You see, we've got drugs for everything today and we can prolong life in so many ways that the folks of the first century could have never known. They had to deal with so many diseases that they basically had no way to help, such as: blindness, boils, deafness, speech impediments, dysentery, seizures, fevers, hemorrhaging of the stomach and colon, internal tumors, pestilences from rats and mice, carcinomas and one of the worst of all leprosy (as we saw last week).

You will remember Jesus touched a man with leprosy...



...this would have been absolutely mind-boggling. No one would have gotten within shouting distance of a leper and yet, Jesus touched down. Jesus reached down (LITERALLY) to the low of the low and healed the man.

You see when Jesus was on this earth, He embraced every type of human being alive with the truth of the Good News that He could save them from their sin. Jesus was willing to do that no matter who you were or your lot in life. He was willing to touch even a leper and as we'll see today, He'll touch a woman and heal a paralyzed boy at the request of a despised Gentile.

This morning I want to work bit backwards. We'll start in **Matthew 8, verse 14** and eventually work our way back up to verses 5-13.

Matthew 8:14

14 And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever.

Now as we begin, let me remind you where we are. Peter's house is in Capernaum. Here's a map of the area of the territory of Galilee in northern Israel.



You'll see Capernaum at about 11 o'clock on the northern border of the Sea of Galilee.

It was there that Jesus had to make home base for Himself and His disciples, because He had been run out of His hometown of Nazareth (to the south and west...about 7 o'clock), because they thought He was crazy when at the age of 30, He began saying that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. It was in Capernaum that Jesus and His men stayed at Peter's house. I showed this to you last week. They've dug up the foundation of the large home...



It was here that Jesus slept, ate and ministered for close to three years. In fact, about 80% of His miracles were performed in and around Capernaum.

So, think with me...He comes off the mountain where He had been preaching... A leper runs up to Him and Jesus heals Him and that's fantastic...but Jesus is worn out...He's been preaching and teaching and He is heading to Peter's house probably to eat something and rest. (Again...we'll see in few minutes that He's encountered before He gets there...but, ultimately, He ends up there...) And when He arrives, He finds that Peter's mother-in-law is sick with a fever.

Now folks, this is no ordinary fever. The Greek word intimates that it's a fever that's making her deathly sick. She's not got a cold. She's sick with a fever that is dominating her to the point that the Greek phrase "lying sick with a fever," meant that they were: "uncertain of the outcome." They didn't know if she would make it or not. Remember, there were very few doctors and even less medicine in that day. But, the Great Physician has entered that house...

Matthew 8:15

15 He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him.

Wow! Here again...with just a touch...



...and the fever left her WHEN? After a couple of days of chicken noodle soup and a visit to the local clinic and \$30 copay...she finally...and slowly recovered after 2 WEEKS and eventually got her strength back? Nope! She got up IMMEDIATELY and she began to serve JESUS!

Oh, this is such a beautiful picture of how it should be for any and all of us, who are touched by Jesus... We should rise up and serve Him, just like Peter's mother-in-law. You see, that should be the automatic response of all of our lives. We should willingly serve Him immediately and not hold back because we have an attitude of gratitude for all He has done for us.

By the way, do you know what the word for "SERVE" is in the Greek that's used in verse 15? **Diakoneō**, which is the exact same word that's used for a Deacon in the New Testament. You want to know what a Deacon is to do? Wait on people and care for people in the church. Keep that in mind, as you are nominating men to serve as Deacons.

So Jesus comes off the mountain from His preaching and He is healing everybody that's brought to Him. **Look at verse 16.**

Matthew 8:16-17

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 quoted part of Isaiah 53:5, which Jesus fulfilled as He performed these miracles. Listen, you need to hear this...

Don't quote verse 17 and believe that you'll never get sick or have a cold if you just believe in Jesus. That's not true. Some teach this. And they teach that if you just come to Jesus no one in your family will ever die of cancer. That's not true and that's not sound doctrine. You see, some people build their entire theology about sickness, disease and suffering around this verse. They say, "Just come to Jesus and He'll make you well...He'll heal you because He 'took our illnesses and bore our diseases.'"

That is true...He did, He took our illnesses and bore our diseases...but this prophecy of Isaiah's was fulfilled as He healed people who were brought to Him during His three-year ministry.

Matthew 8:17

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

Listen...today, we know that we might pray for someone who is sick and yet, they still might not be healed or even die. Is this because we didn't have enough faith? Is this because we didn't claim Matthew 8:17 or Isaiah 53? No! It's because it wasn't God's will to heal them and because we don't know if it's God's will to heal a person...and because we know that we have not because we ask not...then, we must pray and we pray in faith and yet, at the same time...in our praying and in our trusting, we have faith that our Good, good Father knows best. You see, verse 17 simply focuses us on Jesus' messianic role as healer, because the Jews knew that the Messiah would come and He would heal every disease and sickness. And that's exactly what Jesus did during His ministry.

Now jump back up to verse 5. Jesus is now going to do the unthinkable once again. This time, He's going to honor the request of a Gentile, which is a non-Jewish person. In fact a Jew would be considered ceremonially unclean if they touched a Gentile or even entered their home. But, Jesus was going to do more than that. He was going to answer the request of a Gentile and not only that...but, the most hated of all Gentiles: a Roman Soldier.

Matthew 8:5-6

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."

Now what is a centurion? Here's a picture of one...



A centurion was a Roman soldier who rose through the ranks of being a soldier himself. You couldn't become a Centurion by appointment...you had to rise through the ranks from nothing...to becoming a man who had charge over 100 men (hence the name centurion). You see, Israel was occupied by the Romans, and the Romans wanted to make sure that the land of Palestine stayed quiet and peaceful, so they established governors to oversee the territories. Pilate was the Governor during these days of Jesus' ministry and Pilate had at his disposal many centurions and soldiers under the direction of men called "Tribunes." Tribunes commanded many centurions.

Speaking of which...we are going to be showing the movie: RISEN, here this Friday night at 7 pm.



It's the account of a Roman Military Tribune, named Clavius, who is tasked with solving the mystery of what happened to Jesus in the weeks following the crucifixion. It was his job to try to disprove the rumors that Jesus had risen from the dead and to try to prevent an uprising in Jerusalem. Please sign-up if you can be with us.

So, the Jews hated the Romans who were Gentiles that had charge over them and they despised the Centurions and considered them nothing but dogs because they forced them to turn over high taxes to Rome and most of all because they were Gentiles.

Now amazingly, one of these despised men is asking Jesus, a Jewish man to do him a favor. The crowd is watching! Surely Jesus will tell the man, “No way!” Well, we’ll see...but first we need to understand something that we don’t get from Matthew. Matthew says this...

Matthew 8:5

5 When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him.

Yet, the Centurion didn’t actually come and speak directly to Jesus. **Turn to Luke 7 and we’ll see Luke’s account of where the centurion actually sent people to represent him.**

Luke 7:1-5

1 After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. 3 When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, 5 for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.”

Listen, here’s why read this. The Jewish audience to whom Matthew wrote, knew that when a Roman Centurion made an order, whoever carried it out did so on his behalf. It’s like in Matthew 27:26, which records that Pilate scourged Jesus. We know that Pilate didn’t do that physically. Yet, his order to do so was as if he, himself had flogged Jesus.

Now, here’s something else we need to understand about this centurion. He was a very good man. He was so good and so kind that Luke records that he had built a synagogue for the Jews. He was so well respected that the Elders of the synagogue went to Jesus on the centurion’s behalf. That’s almost a miracle in itself that Jews would go on behalf of a Roman soldier and tell Jesus that the Centurion is (vs. 4) “worthy to have you do this for him.”

I took this picture of the synagogue the centurion had built when I was there in 2007.



This is the actual place where Jesus walked.

(By the way, come join us **Wed. night** as I take us on the paths that Jesus walked as He made His way to Calvary. I will be showing you pictures of that journey through the streets of Jerusalem. It’s a fascinating journey. We’re having hamburgers Wed. night. So, please sign up and join us.)

Did you notice something else as we read from Luke’s account? Luke said in verse 2, “...**a centurion had a SERVANT who was sick at the point of death...**” Now that word “servant,” is the Greek word **doulos**, which means bondservant (slave). Now here’s what’s interesting, Matthew said this was a servant boy, a **pais**- (Servant) that literally means a CHILD. Now church family...understand this...slave servants were nobodies! They were thought of by the Romans as

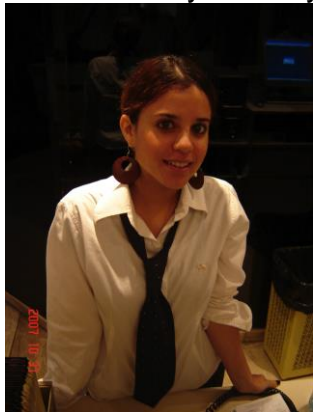
nothing more valuable than a goat or even a good plow. They were expendable. Yet, this centurion cared so much about this little slave boy, who was a servant, that he had pity on him and wanted him well. And so he sent word through the Elders of the synagogue to Jesus asking if He'd heal him.

But, there's something else we can't miss here. **Look back at Matthew 8.** This Centurion is going to call Jesus: kyrios "LORD." That's the same word the leper used. It means Sovereign, Master of all, and in the Hebrew translation it means Jehovah. This centurion is going to call Jesus: God. The centurion believed Jesus was indeed God. Watch this...verse 6.

Matthew 8:6-8

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."

You see, at some point it appears this Centurion had likely heard Jesus speak and it seems that he had reached the place that he actually believed Jesus was indeed who He said He was: THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD and he acknowledged that by calling Him LORD. Yet out of respect for Jesus, because he knew that Jesus was a Jew and would be defiled if He entered into the Centurion's home or came into contact with him as a Gentile, he didn't want Jesus to come into his home. And by the way, this sentiment between Jews and Gentiles is still true today. **See this girl?**



Her name is Rose. She worked at the hotel in Jerusalem where our group stayed. We were in that hotel three nights and so I got to know Rose. She was a Jewish young lady, and the day we left I stuck out my hand across the hotel counter to shake her hand and wish her well and she said something that shocked me. She said, "I not shake your hand...you are a Gentile." I took my hand back and I said, "Oh...okay...I'm sorry." She said, "It's okay...you are nice man...thanks for talking to me." I had shared with her about why we were there (to see where Jesus walked and lived and died and rose from the dead for our sins).

The problem was she didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah and she told me she went here to pray for the Messiah to come...



That's the Western Wall of the Temple of Jerusalem. It's called the "Wailing Wall." Literally Jews still go there today to pray for the Messiah to come. They have to wash their

hands before they go to pray. They must cleanse their hands from any defilements, including Gentiles.



BTW...Even in the bathrooms in a restaurant in Jerusalem, was this...



I took this picture of this lady and her baby at the Wailing Wall.



She was praying and reading the Old Testament, rocking back and forth. She was praying in Hebrew and my tour guide said, "She's crying out to God for the Messiah to come." My heart broke! He's already come!!

You see, church family, this is so sad. Jesus came to His own (the Jews) and they (by and large) received Him not... They refused to accept Him as the Messiah. And we'll see Jesus acknowledge this very fact in a just a moment. But, I want you to see something else first. **Pick up with me in verse 9**

Matthew 8:9-10

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.

Church, only twice in Scripture does it say that Jesus "marveled," HERE at the centurion's faith, and in Mark 6, when Jesus said this about His hometown of Nazareth...

Mark 6:5-6a

5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. **6** And he marveled because of their unbelief.

What a difference. The Jews...(His own people) refused to believe, but the Centurion believed...see it in verse 13.

Matthew 8:13

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.

Can you imagine that little servant boy hopping up from his paralysis and running around! What a joy!! What a celebration that must have ensued. But, there is the opposite reaction for those who reject Jesus. Jesus said this in verse 11.

Matthew 8:11-12

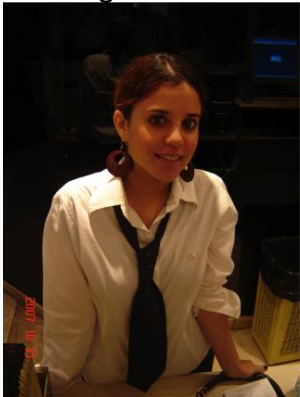
11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, **12** while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

What is Jesus describing? Hell. You say, "How can there be darkness in Hell (vs12)?" Simple. It's a supernatural place that God created not for humans...but for the angels who rebelled in heaven... Yet, mankind is given a choice...just like the Centurion and the Jews as to whether or not they will receive or reject Jesus. Those who reject Jesus will go to a place of eternal fire...but, a place that emits no light at all. It will be utter darkness (2 Peter 2 and Jude 1). Bible Commentator Matthew Henry describes it with such striking power.

"In Hell there is fire, but no light; it is utter darkness; darkness in extremity; the highest degree of darkness, without any remainder, or mixture, or hope, of light of God; not the least gleam or glimpse of either. It is darkness that results from being shut out of heaven, the land of the light. They, who are without are in the regions of total darkness.

Yet, that is not the worst of it, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In Hell there will be great grief, floods of tears shed to no purpose; anguish of spirit preying eternally upon the vitals, in the sense of the wrath of God and eternal separation from all hope. That is the torment of the damned. Damned sinners, who will gnash their teeth for spite and vexation, full of the fury of the Lord; seeing with envy the happiness of others, and reflecting with horror upon the former possibility of their own being happy, which is now forever past." Matthew Henry

I can't get Rose out of my mind.



For all of these years...9 years. Has she chosen to believe? She's probably around 30 years old now. And this lady and her child...



She's probably in here early 30's and that child is probably about 10 years old now. Have they chosen to believe? I don't know and there's nothing I can do about it now, but pray. But, you are here and you can choose to believe today. Will you believe and place your trust in Jesus like the Centurion or will you reject Jesus just as the Jews of Nazareth did? I pray you will be a Gentile who believes.

Let us pray!
