

Many Voices | A Borderless Gospel

Unexpected Communion

Matthew 7:24-8:13

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Review: Laurie Brenner talked about what “works” for us, and our tendency to discard ideas we’re not comfortable with, including what we read in scripture or hear at church. She reminded us that such a reaction may be ignoring the power of the Spirit and the work of God in us. How have you stepped out in faith to participate in something that demonstrates God’s work in us, beyond what we can do on our own power? What happened?

Pray: Lord, we pray for openness to the unexpected, to how your Spirit may surprise us as we say yes to coming along with you as you work wonders in our world. Amen.

Read: Matthew 7:24-8:13

Discussion:

1. The verses at the end of chapter 7 conclude the Sermon on the Mount. What does hearing and acting on “these” words (v. 24) look like?

What types of behavior would you expect to see in someone who acted on Jesus’ words?

2. In 7:28-29, we’re told the crowds were astounded at Jesus’ teaching, because he spoke with authority, not like the scribes.

What do you think made Jesus’ teaching so different from what people normally heard?

Have you heard something in this summer’s teaching through the sermon series that stood out to you as showing unique authority? What was it?

3. Moving into chapter 8:1-4, Jesus is surrounded by crowds, and we’re told of a leper asking for, and receiving healing. Jesus tells the now healed leper to go find the priest and offer the gift required under the law. Why was that necessary?

How do you think the leper’s life changed after he was healed?

4. Next, in verses 5-13, Jesus heals a centurion’s servant.

How do you think the crowds reacted to the centurion in close conversation with Jesus?

What was so remarkable about the centurion’s faith?

5. Looking over this passage, we have the wise builder contrasted with the foolish, a leper, a Roman centurion, those who will come from the ends of the earth (east and west) to sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That’s a pretty motley crew to consider. If this is the kingdom of

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heaven, how can such different people be part of the same kingdom?

Jesus indicates that some who expected to be in the kingdom won't be.

Is that fair? Why or why not?

What is Jesus telling us about what the kingdom of heaven is REALLY like?

Application: This week, consider who you know in the kingdom who you disagree with, don't like being around, or perhaps whose music you can't stand. How could you extend community to that person or group to understand more about their faith and how they see the kingdom of heaven?

Pray: Lord, give us courage to reach out to others and learn from them to how to ask for healing, how to demonstrate faith, how to put your words into action. Amen.