

Digging Deeper

X-Factor X-ceptional Faith

Matthew 8:5-13 [Luke 7:1-10 parallel account]

July 2, 2023

As we begin digging deeper into this passage carefully read Matthew 8:1-13. We will specifically address the second of three miracles (counting the “many” as one miracle even though it is many!) that Jesus performed after his preaching the Sermon on the Mount. It is imperative that we look at the last two verses of Matthew 7 to fully grasp what is happening here: ²⁸“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.” Matthew 7:28-29. Notice two words “astonished” and “authority.” Hold these words in mind as you read again the account of the centurion’s encounter with Jesus.

Day One – A ministry to “outsiders” Matthew 8:5



Did you notice that the first two encounters Jesus had after his sermon were both “outsiders”? The leper could not even enter the city without extreme measures. “Lepers could not enter Jerusalem at all. Gentiles could, but they could go no further into the temple than the outermost Court of the Gentiles. Male Gentiles were considered unclean unless they became proselytes, were circumcised, and ritually washed. Only a leper was more unclean than a Gentile (Bruner, F. D. (2007). Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12).

The church need go further in understanding Jesus than recognizing He came to this world for everyone. No one has a corner on Jesus. He belongs to the world. He came that all men could be saved. And he shows he came that all men should be healed. Sin not only separated us from God, but it separated us from wholeness – physically as well as spiritually.

Questions we need to ask ourselves: Who and why do we look at some people as unworthy or unclean? Are we selective in whom we will present the gospel? What can we do to tear down walls of separation which sin has erected?

Is it time for us to pray that God will open our eyes and hearts to those who are outcasts of our society?

Day Two – Astonishment Amplified! Matthew 5:7

It would be easy to say the great sermon Jesus just preached was for the Jewish community. They incorrectly assumed as the “chosen people” that others were excluded. It would be comfortable to believe that being born in a certain family or a certain religion is all one needs to acquire eternal life or eternal fellowship with God. Jesus puts that out of the realm of reality by what he does after teaching men how to live, how to pray and how to worship by responding to people these fine Jewish folks would have nothing to do with – a leper and a Roman soldier! Both of them despised and ignored.

The centurion, a Roman soldier who was the leader of one hundred men, dared to approach Jesus because his servant was sick. The centurion recognized as powerful as he was, he was powerless to do anything for his servant! What a great reason to come to Christ. There is so much in life we are

powerless to change, but there is a Savior who came to transform men and redeem their circumstances. It is no wonder that Jesus would commend his faith.

Do you see the response of Christ? “I will come and heal him.” There was no bargain here merely a positive response to a stated problem. The centurion does not ask Jesus for anything, he merely states his situation. My servant is laying paralyzed and suffering terribly. “I will come and heal him.” What that must have done to the heart of that soldier one can only imagine.

As you approach Christ, do you approach him with awe and appreciation for what he alone can do? Today why don't you begin to write down those impossible things you are dealing with – a failed relationship, an addiction you have been unable to break, an attitude you have been unable to alter? Make your list and start giving in to Christ. He came to transform and to heal.

Day Three – A Powerful Word, A Commendable Faith Matthew 8:8-10

The centurion is a man to be admired. He understands not only the authority of Jesus but his power as well. The centurion knew that Jesus didn't have to come to his home, Jesus merely needed to say the word and it was done.

Perhaps you haven't thought of this before as you read this passage but all Jesus ever has to do is say the word. Go all the way back to Genesis and you discover it is the word that brings about creation! You do remember these words: “And God said,” and as a result of him saying “Let there be” light, heaven, dry land separated from the waters that covered the earth, vegetation, the sun, moon and stars, birds and fish, and then animals of all kinds. Everything that was made God made. And just so you are not confused Jesus reminds us he was with God (see John 1:1-3) and “without him was not anything made that was made.”

Also note the manner in which the centurion addresses Jesus – Lord. There is no ambiguity here. He knows to whom he is speaking. The centurion seems to understand what no one in Israel understands: Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus marveled, commending the centurion for his exemplary faith and censuring Israel for lack of faith. (ESV Study Bible)

When you go to Christ in prayer how do you address him? When the disciples wanted to know how to pray Jesus taught them how to address God. Go back and read Luke 11:1-4. As you pray today before you ask, why not say what Jesus taught his disciples to say.

Day Four – An Uncomfortable Position Matthew 8:11-12

Jesus reminds his followers of an uncomfortable truth. I will not matter what men call you but it will matter what you are! Matthew Henry, 105 (emphasis added), was judicious several hundred years ago: “In that great day it will not avail men to have been ‘children of the kingdom,’ either as Jews or as Christians; for men will then be judged, not by what they were ‘called,’ but what they ‘were.’” Bruner, F. D. (2007). *Matthew: A Commentary: The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*”

What I am is far more important than what people think I am. My father used to say, “There will be people in heaven I didn't think would be there. There will be people not in heaven I expected to see there.”

We need to remind ourselves regularly that God looks at the heart. ⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7

Jesus is reminding his followers (for that is who is now addressing) “the **sons of the kingdom** (a Semitic term for national Israel) will lose their claim to the kingdom unless they follow the centurion’s example of faith.” (ESV Study Bible)

Today examine your heart. Are you what you say you are? Does your life parallel your profession of faith? We do this every time we take communion if we are taking it genuinely. Heart examination is an important part of digging deeper in your own spiritual walk with Christ.

Day Five – A Faith Worth Having Matthew 8:13

This is a WOW moment in many lives. The servant is healed because a man had a faith worth having. A soldier was commended because he had a faith worth having. The disciples saw the results of a faith worth having. And it is impossible to number the multitudes who have had their lives transformed because they saw a faith worth having. Jesus was exalted because a centurion had a faith worth having.

What do we mean “a faith worth having”? Quite simply Jesus put it “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” “Faith mainly *talks* to the Lord; it often hardly knows what to ask him or how to ask it. Sometimes all one needs to do is state the problem: the how and the what of help are the Lord’s business.” (Bruner, *The Christbook*)

“This Roman soldier teaches us the great practical crowning lesson of being satisfied with the word of Christ. We need nothing but the word of Christ; for the word of Christ is not like the word of an impotent man, that falls helpless to the ground. It is mighty; the omnipotence of God is in it. The only lifeboat in this wide sea is the word of Christ. The only safe anchorage is the word of Christ. The only enduring thing is the word of Christ.” (H. Price Hughes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 113)

As you pray today can you tell your Savior you trust his word? Remind yourself of the truth of Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” As you spend time in his word, why don’t you thank him for giving us his word. Psalm 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.