



ATTHEW

PART TWO, BOOK ONE
A KINGDOM COME





WELCOME TO MATTHEW

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

MALACHI 4:4-5



The above verse is the last portion of scripture found in the Old Testament. It is a closing of an era, but also a looking to the future. What is fascinating is that in one turn of the page, a reader goes from Malachi in the Old Testament to the first page of the first book of the New Testament, Matthew. What is hidden to many readers is the massive gulf between the page turn—between Matthew and Malachi. In that one turn of the page 400 years transpire.

For 400 years the people of God lived in this silence. In this time, there was much violence and war. Invaders from far off lands, evil tyrants, rulers who have no right to rule, exercised their power. Although at times it seemed as if hope was lost, the faithful clung to promises of old, promises that one day a good King would come to rule over his people. This King would exercise wisdom and implement the will of God. This King would be more than a King... he would be a Messiah.

Matthew tells his story in this context. When hope seems all but lost, when dictators rule, and when the promises of God seem like a long forgotten hope, Matthew introduces us to a man named Jesus of Nazareth. This is his story.





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PRAYER & FASTING

MATTHEW 6:5-18

⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¹⁶ "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.





INTRODUCTION

In the middle of three directions to avoid hypocrisy, we catch a glimpse into a life of prayer prescribed by the Christ. The One who knows the Father intimately describes how to engage with him directly, and these words provide insight into where kingdom life is intended to find its core power. It is centered on God and his will which tears us out of our own desires to align with him.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Are you good at communicating your struggles, your hopes, and the like? Why/why not?
- 2 What is your typical goal for prayer in your life? Are there situations that precipitate more prayer than others? Why/why not?
- 3 What makes you uncomfortable about prayer?
- 4 When you read “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” what do you think about? How much of this petition is about external things and how much about you and how you live? Give specific examples if you can.
- 5 For those of us in the Western World where self-sufficiency is heralded as virtue, what does it mean for us to “pray for daily bread”?

- 6 Read Matthew 18:21-35. The prayer not only asks for forgiveness but assumes we "have forgiven." Are you someone who forgives easily? Why/why not?
- 7 How is the prayer speaking to "here and now" and how does it speak to the "future"?
- 8 Have you ever fasted? What prompted it?
- 9 Fasting was built into the weekly rhythm of early Christians. Why do you think it is not practiced as much now? What would be a step toward renewing it?



GOSPEL MOTIVATION

Jesus tells us to pray like this. It is a model. We know from other texts that Jesus prays, in fact, he prays a lot. This text gives us an insight into not just the necessity of prayer but its content. One of the most startling characteristics is its communal and familial connection. "Our Father." The collective community of this kingdom can call on God as Father. In fact, we do this together. If you have not memorized the Lord's Prayer already, do it this week. If you know it, teach it to someone like your children or a good friend. Maybe find a prayer partner that will commit to pray with you this year and maybe fast with you for the purpose of reliance on God.



REASURES IN HEAVEN

MATTHEW 6:19-24

¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.





INTRODUCTION

Three seemingly different ideas are connected in this text—treasure, light and masters. Remember the context that brought us to this point. Jesus has said that a person’s righteousness must exceed the scribe and the Pharisee in order to enter the kingdom. He has explained how the religious “insiders” that many “look up to” are often hypocritical in their religious duty. Those acting in this hypocritical way have already received their reward because they are looking to receive esteem from humanity. This acclaim they have been looking for and received is earthly and temporary, but there is a greater treasure available.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Are you a long-term thinker? Do you establish long-term goals? Why/why not? Give examples.
- 2 Read Psalm 119:9-16. Summarize what the text from the Psalm is prescribing. How are the heart and eye connected in this Psalm? How does this compare to Matthew 6:19-24?
- 3 In Matthew 6:22-23, the eye is being used metaphorically. How would you define what “eye” is referring to given the text directly before it?
- 4 Read Matthew 13:44 and 19:16-26. How does the text today compare with these parables?

- 5 Jesus does not explain why treasures in heaven are safe. What is the assumption that underlies this? Why is this assumption more difficult in our culture? What makes this assumption hard for you?
- 6 Do you think this text is against savings accounts, pension plans, and 401(k)s? Why/why not? Taking the three sections together, what is the overall command?
- 7 What is something that you have treasured in a disproportionate way? How did you come to recognize your error? What has helped you remedy the issue?
- 8 Money is personified in the last verse as a slave master. How do you deal wisely with money? What are some pitfalls that you are careful to avoid and how do you do it?
- 9 Read Isaiah 10:1-4 and Ezekiel 7:10-13. In the Bible wealth is not always portrayed as a bad thing, but pitfalls and temptations often came with it. How would you feel if you lost everything today? On a practical level, how does Jesus provide hope and comfort in this passage?





GOSPEL MOTIVATION

Looking to God as our source for life requires trust. But the truth is we often can trust in things that are fleeting rather than the One who has given us not just salvation and forgiveness, but his divine presence. Temporary things like wealth can make us feel less vulnerable or even important for a moment. Jesus is identifying a different pattern of living. Setting our minds on earthly accolades and wealth is simply short-sighted for a follower of Christ. We all need to stop the patterns of self-reliance and recognize where our provision and hope come from in an ultimate sense. It's time to evaluate. How self-reliant are you living? How comfortable are you because of the size of your home or your paycheck? Maybe now is a good time to redirect your trust. The Lord's Prayer from last week included requests for provision and protection from temptation. How might this week's text change how you pray those words?



NXIETY

MATTHEW 6:25-34

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But

if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.





INTRODUCTION

"Therefore" turns a corner here. The kingdom values of generosity, prayer and fasting that avoids any need for acclaim, and the cautions of inappropriate reliance on wealth previously addressed are pointing to a deeper issue. Trust. When we do not trust, we scramble to come up with solutions ourselves and when that effort does not payoff like we hoped, we worry. Here Jesus identifies God's grace for his creation, and is asking the disciples to consider how they fit within it.

DISCUSSION

- 1 What gives you the greatest anxiety in life today? Consider the last few weeks. What have you been worrying about most?
- 2 Read Joshua 22:10-29. What were the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh worried about? Was there concern valid? Is it ever reasonable to be concerned about the future?
- 3 In today's Matthew text, what anxiety is Jesus specifically speaking about? Does this mean that all worries are bad? Explain.

- 4 Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28. Paul speaks of his own worry here. Consider Paul's experiences. How might you respond to the same? Is his anxiety appropriate?
- 5 Now read Philippians 4:4-7. What is Paul saying we should do with our anxieties? What is his solution? What might Paul say to someone who is sitting in anxiety all the time?
- 6 Reread Matthew 6:31. When we ask these questions today, our reasons (and need) are likely very different than someone in the first century. Describe a scenario when you might ask these types of questions. How might your goal be different than a first century person? What might that reveal about our cultural situation that is different?
- 7 Pagans "seek after these things." What are the things that you seek after that may make you look a little like an unbeliever? What can you do about it?
- 8 What do you think it means to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"? What might it look like in your life this week?
- 9 How often do you think about the basic needs of others? What could help you consider these needs more?





GOSPEL MOTIVATION

Not all concern for the future is sin. If we pay careful attention, Jesus is speaking of the basic necessities of life and where our trust should be directed. The birds and the lilies are covered by God's common grace in creation. How much more will he care for our necessities? Remember in this kingdom we can all say "Our Father," in fact, Jesus reinforces our family heritage here by saying "your heavenly Father" not once, but twice. The Father provides. The Father knows our needs. Do you trust him? Think one step further. If we are God's image bearers, caretakers of his desires for his creation, should we not be ready to care for those among us that are struggling with basic necessities? A good challenge is to consider whether we spend more time worrying about what we think we need rather than considering those around us who have need. When is that last time you faithfully gave to someone else when they were in need?



JUDGING & ASKING

MATTHEW 7:1 – 11

¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. ⁶ "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your

pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!





INTRODUCTION

Whether you recognize it or not, you have something similar to an operating system like a computer. Everyday as you interact with people and come across situations, you are making decisions that are influenced by how you grew up, your personality, how you woke up this morning and so forth. Your operating system has errors in it, parts that allow you to operate outside of God's parameters. The way we treat others, the way we trust in our own ability to make it through life, and our failure to trust God are a few ways these errors are revealed. Jesus cautions his disciples about these things in today's text.

DISCUSSION

- 1 In English, what can the word "judge" mean? Come up with as many definitions and uses as possible.
- 2 Read John 7:14-24. Considering how this section in the Gospel of John ends, how might Jesus' words there help us consider his words here in Matthew 7:1-2?
- 3 How can the thought here in Matthew 7:1-2 connect and enhance Jesus' words on hypocrisy in Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18? How should we deal with hypocrisy when we uncover it?

- 4 The kind of hypocrisy that Jesus is warning against in Matthew 7 is filled out later in Matthew. Read Matthew 23:1-33 and consider your own life. Describe some ways you might be failing to “practice what you preach.”
- 5 Jesus speaking to his disciples says “if you then, who are evil” to his disciples. In what sense do you think he means this? In comparison to what?
- 6 Compare Matthew 7:11 with last week’s text. How are they connected? What is the thought that carries into this week?
- 7 Have you ever had someone speak to you in a way or treat you in a way that seemed as if you were somehow “less” than them? Describe the situation. Can you remember a time when you did the same?
- 8 You may have heard Matthew 7:8 quoted or memorized it yourself because of what it seems to promise. After reading verses 9-11, what is Jesus really communicating? In his analogies of family (son, children, Father), who are we? Describe how this might connect back to the Lord’s Prayer.



GOSPEL MOTIVATION

We make judgments all the time. Good biblical judgment requires discernment, acute self-awareness, and a gracious attitude toward others which includes mercy, forgiveness and love. A follower of Jesus has received these and thus passes the same on. Jesus here is reminding his listeners that judgment that reduces another person or comes from a prideful, flawed self-perception is dangerous territory. He is also reminding us that the Father is good and more generous than we imagine. Even we who are evil receive from his goodness. Have you ever asked God to change you, I mean really asked for change so deep that it scares you to think about what else it might take away from you? Your fear is that it might take away your very identity. Remember a Good Father is a “good gift” giver. Your identity as a follower of Christ is tied up in his kingdom and his desires. Pray with someone for that change.



OLDEN RULE, GOOD FRUIT, & THE KINGDOM

MATTHEW 7:12-23

¹² "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree

cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'





INTRODUCTION

We all know the Golden Rule. It is interesting to note that major religions around the world have similar statements but they are typically negative, meaning, something like “don’t do things to others that you don’t want done to you.” If you look carefully, Jesus presents it in a positive light and then gives some challenges to how one should perceive life in the kingdom.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Have you ever waited a long time in a line for something good? Describe what you were waiting for. What made the wait worthwhile?
- 2 Read Matthew 7:9-12 again. Jesus wants to correct our attitude and understanding as it relates to two parties. In Matthew 7:9-11, toward whom is he pointing? How about in Matthew 7:12? Where have you seen these two ideas paired elsewhere in the Bible?
- 3 Find the last time “Law and Prophets” was used in Matthew. What was the context there? Do you remember what it meant? Is it the same or different here?

- 4 In our culture, we all have most likely heard someone say “Be who you want to be.” How is this different than the Golden Rule in today’s text? What are some of the inherent problems a Christian may encounter by living out this cultural statement rather than the biblical statement from today’s text?
- 5 What do you think the “gate” is that Jesus speaks about here? What does a narrow gate require that a wide one does not?
- 6 Compare Matthew 7:15-20 with Luke 6:43-45. What is the difference in the contexts? How does it give nuance to the meaning of each?
- 7 Matthew 7:19 shares words with Matthew 3:10. Compare the context and speakers of these two similar statements.
- 8 One of the scariest verses in the Bible is found here. Read Matthew 7:21-23 again slowly. Does this verse bother you? Why/why not?





GOSPEL MOTIVATION

Your view of the Father and the “other” matter. In fact, it has “eschatological” implications. That’s just a big word that means “last things” or ultimate things. Jesus’ kingdom is headed toward a great crescendo, a climactic completion where evil will be defeated. Today’s text whispers a little about that end. Jesus continues to describe how a “kingdom” citizen differs from a “worldly” citizen. Kingdom citizens make hard decisions that may mean that comfort is lost in the moment because the effort is costly, but in the end the beauty is in the fruit. That fruit points to the climactic event of his return where all is set right. Do you have hard decisions you have been putting off? Or maybe you went the easy route recently. What kind of adjustments need to be made in your living that may be costly, but ultimately point to where Christ’s kingdom is going?



ISE FOUNDATIONS

MATTHEW 7:24-29

²⁴ "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his

house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." ²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹ for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.





INTRODUCTION

Hearing and doing equals wisdom. It's a simple calculus. While it might seem easier said than done, Jesus likens wisdom to smart building because he knows that the storm is coming. In our lives we often avoid the storms and seek comfort, but some storms are unavoidable and require wisdom ahead of time. It's important to note that this analogy comes at the end of his teaching. Perhaps his analogy is meant to speak to the whole kingdom life that he has been describing.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Have you ever built something that quickly fell apart? What went wrong? Describe the situation.
- 2 Read James 1:22-25. Compare James' words to Jesus' words here in Matthew 7:24. Considering James is believed to be Jesus' younger half-brother, how does he apply Jesus' teaching on wisdom?
- 3 Who is the wisest person you ever knew? What defined their characteristic "wisdom"? Give examples.
- 4 The Apostle Paul also uses a building metaphor in 1 Corinthians 3:9-15. Read it and compare it to Jesus' building metaphor here. How does Paul talk about the foundation?

- 5 Matthew 7:15-27 contains three separate comparisons in three sections. Identify each comparison (e.g. "two trees") and identify the negative consequence of each. How might you summarize them when considered altogether? What do they all have in common?
- 6 How do you ignore or sometimes try to avoid storms in life? Why do you think you do it? Are there parts of your faith you treat the same way?
- 7 Matthew 7:28 speaks to Jesus' authority. Skim back through the Sermon from Matthew 5 to Matthew 7 and find the moments where Jesus says "I say to you" or "I tell you." How many did you find? Why do you think Jesus' teaching was seen as "amazing"? Why/why not?
- 8 Remember that the scribes and Pharisees were the religious leaders who were looked up to by the people. Read Matthew 5:20 and Matthew 7:28. How has Jesus spoken of the scribes? What has the Sermon on the Mount successfully achieved with the "crowds" who heard him?
- 9 Being at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, how would you summarize what Jesus is teaching? What are the main points? What does the kingdom person look like using specific language from the Sermon?
- 10 How has this sermon changed your understanding of the Christian life? What stood out for you?



GOSPEL MOTIVATION

While this is the end of the Sermon on the Mount, it is by no means the end of Jesus' teaching. Hearing and doing seems to be the core point and there are implications for the future. The simple application this week may be to think about what you have been "hearing" that you have NOT been doing. For many of us, that may be a list of things. Using Jesus' building analogy, pick a brick, just one foundational kingdom brick that you have been putting off or leaving out of your daily or weekly rhythm. How can you change it from "heard it" to "doing it"? What might help the process? How can someone help you in the process?



HE LEPER

MATTHEW 8:1-4

¹ When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. ² And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."





INTRODUCTION

Kingdom teaching is exemplified. When news of this kingdom gets out, Jesus reveals not only its wisdom but what the kingdom looks like in operation. The activity begins with an outcast. In the Law, such an afflicted person was unclean and untouchable. So, what happens when the kingdom breaks in? Healing. Physical, relational, and wholistic renewal.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Do you remember being on the outside in a particular situation? What was the cause? How did you feel?
- 2 Read Numbers 12:10-13, 2 Kings 5:15-27, and 2 Chronicles 26:21. How did the Israelites view leprosy?
- 3 Read Leviticus 13:45-46. Imagine going to the priest for an inspection. Considering the consequence, how might you feel? How would you feel if you were deemed to be chronically leprous?
- 4 After reading the passages on leprosy and understanding what the Law said about it, what would be a response to Matthew 8:3? What should a devout Jew do after touching a leper? What does this imply about Jesus?

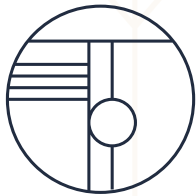
- 5 Leviticus 14:1-32 outlines the requirements under the Law for a healed leper. Why does Jesus send the healed leper to perform this duty under the Law?
- 6 Have you ever witnessed a miracle like this one? Explain. Were you skeptical?
- 7 Who is the closest example of a leper (a metaphoric untouchable) in your life? How do you interact with them (if at all)? What are your obstacles?
- 8 The word rendered "proof" in verse 4 comes from a Greek word that means "witness." Jesus says that the leper should "say nothing to anyone" but also wants him to offer the "proof" of the miracle. What do you think Jesus is trying to achieve?
- 9 Matthew 4:23-25, right before the great sermon, tells us that Jesus was healing and drawing great crowds, and now we zoom in and see some real examples. Why do you think the Sermon on the Mount was inserted before these kingdom miracles?





GOSPEL MOTIVATION

Some of us feel like we need healing. We read stories like this and might even ask why we have not seen such miraculous deeds. Are we to look at these stories as promises for us? Or, are we to see these wondrous acts as premonitions of what the coming kingdom has in store for its citizens? The gospel tells us that Jesus has conquered evil including the sin and brokenness within us, and that when we submit to his will and ways, the healing has already begun. It will be finished. Maybe you need this encouragement or maybe you need to encourage someone who is dealing with a difficult physical challenge. Now seems like a good time to reach out.



THE CENTURION

MATTHEW 8:5-13

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." 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. 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. 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." 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.





INTRODUCTION

Last session was about the leper, an insider because he was an Israelite, but an outsider because of his malady. This week is about an outsider outsider. A Centurion was the foundational backbone of the Roman military complex. He was a commander, an enforcer, and earned his position through previous exploits and loyalty to the Caesar. From an Israelite perspective, he is more enemy and foreigner than anything else. To Jesus, this centurion was something else entirely.

DISCUSSION

- 1 Have you ever had an authority figure ask you for something important? What did you think at first? How did you respond?
- 2 The Centurion says, "I too am a man under authority" in verse 9. What does he recognize about Jesus? Does it seem like hierarchy and authority are bad, good or neutral? Explain.
- 3 What do you think was the primary reason that Jesus marveled at the situation?
- 4 In verse 7, Jesus is willing and ready to go to the Centurion's house. While there is no specific law forbidding entry into a Gentile house, it was to be avoided due to unclean foods and possible idolatry. How is this similar to the previous story of the leper in Matthew 8:1-4?

- 5 How might Jesus' posture toward the leper and the Centurion speak to how we operate today? Is there an ethic that we can derive from these two situations?
- 6 Jesus makes a comparison between outsiders and insiders in Matthew 8:10-12. His words are hard toward the insiders, the "sons of the kingdom." What might the disciples think about Jesus' words? About whom do you think he is speaking?
- 7 What does Jesus see in the Centurion that was absent from the Israelites he has interacted with?
- 8 Read Genesis 12:1-3. Do you see any connection here in Matthew with Abraham? Explain.





GOSPEL MOTIVATION

The faith described in the Old Testament was intended to move beyond Israel into surrounding nations bringing God's ways to the world, but instead the surrounding nations began to influence Israel in a bad way. Now a centurion, not just an outsider but a symbol of tyranny comes to the True Israelite for solutions to life's biggest problems. Imagine being the centurion. You are seen as an enemy by most but your desperation has led you to ask for the unlikely—a Jewish rabbi to come to your home, and perform a healing. What a beautiful picture. And, Jesus does not just heal. He takes the weight of the brokenness behind sickness. Maybe you feel like an outsider. Jesus bids you to come to him. Maybe you know an outsider that needs a fresh invitation to the King.



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