



# MATTHEW

## THE KINGDOM COME

Kingdom Authority  
Matthew 8:1-17

Feb 27, 2022

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### Introduction

Good morning, Union Church. My name is Kyle Rodriguez, if we haven't had a chance to meet yet, I am one of the pastors here. It is my privilege this morning to preach the Word of God to you.

But before we do that, would you pray with me?

*Dear Lord, as we open up your holy Word, we ask you to open up our eyes to clearly see your truth, our minds to seriously reflect on your truth, and our hearts to humbly receive your truth.*

*As we read your holy Word, we ask you to read our hearts and convict us of sin that lies hidden, challenge us to do the works you have prepared for us, and comfort us amidst the fears that bind us.*

*As we process your holy Word, we ask you to give us clarity and focus of mind that will keep us awake, alert, and engaged.*

*As we love your holy Word, we ask that you would help us to not only cherish your presence and your truth but the life of our neighbors. Do not let this Word sit in our hearts unmoving, but let it overflow in love toward our families, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the World.*

*Lord, we trust that you will do this work, for you have said that the word that proceeds from your mouth will not return void, but shall accomplish all that you please, it shall prosper in the purposes for which you send it. So, Lord, in confidence and hope we pray this prayer, in the name of your son, the living Word, and our King. In his name, Amen.*

### Context and Introduction

If you have a Bible with you, I invite you to turn to Matthew 8, if you aren't there already.

Over the last several months we have begun working our way through the Book of Matthew—one of the four gospel biographies of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. And one of the things we've tried to do as we've walked through Matthew is to show how the writers of the Bible (both the Holy Spirit

and the men who wrote them) are intentional in how they structure the Word of God—the order that is used, the emphatic or repeated words and phrases, what they choose to quote from other Scriptures, etc.

And so, there are times throughout this series where we have looked at small sections of text and times when we've looked at broad swaths, to see how Matthew (and the Spirit) is making a larger point through the use of multiple stories and examples. Seeing multiple stories at once actually illuminates them and help us see parts of the stories that we might have missed if we just read it in an isolated manner. It's kind of like how wearing a certain color will bring out a different shade in someone's eyes, or eating the right side will emphasize bring out a different flavor in a meal. It the difference between listening to one song or a whole album, one Star Wars movie or binging the whole series.

And today we are engaging in that broad, top-down look at Scripture, because Matthew is really uniquely highlighting a couple of Jesus's attributes in chapters 8 and 9 of his gospel.

We have just finished the Sermon the Mount portion of Matthew's gospel in chapters 5, 6, and 7—the first and longest of Jesus's teaching discourses in the gospels. And coming off of that context, coming off of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew makes a very clear transition. It is the two verses preceding our text this morning, the last two verses of chapter 7:

*“And when Jesus finished these sayings”*

Now, we have to stop right there. This phrase: “when Jesus finished” is used five times in the book of Matthew. If you write in your Bibles, you could put brackets around that phrase, or highlight it. It marks the end of a section of Jesus's teaching and the beginning of the next chunk of biography, of action. But it doesn't merely mark the end of Jesus's teaching, it also often gives us a clue of what is coming next, of a big theme of the coming biographical action scenes.

And look at what Matthew says with this transition: *“the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”*

The people of Israel were *astonished* at his teaching! Astonished! They wondered and marveled, because here was a teacher of authority. The scribes and Pharisees taught with an authority of their education, of their formal titles, but this man taught with an intrinsic authority, an authority that was based on his character and person.

And as we continue through chapters 8 and 9 of Matthew, we're going to continue to see this authority of Jesus come up. And some certain questions arise from that: What is the authority of Jesus? How much does it cover? What does he use it for? Is that authority good for us?

Now, let's dive in.

## 1. Jesus has ultimate, unparalleled, unlimited authority.

The first thing that we see is that Jesus has ultimate, unparalleled, unlimited authority. His authority covers every aspect and scope of life and creation.

Look at some of the ways Jesus's authority is talked about here.

In verse 2 of chapter 8, a leper comes to Jesus and says: "If you will, you can make me clean." This leper is certain that it is within Jesus's power to heal him—that he has authority not merely over ideas and religious teachings, but over the body itself. And leprosy, in the words of one commentator, was one of the "most feared medical conditions"<sup>1</sup> of the day, because there was no cure! It was the ancient near eastern version of a chronic illness. It was contagious, and there was no cure. To be a leper was to be condemned to a slow-moving death, but death nonetheless. And yet, the leper here is confident that within Jesus's scope of authority was the authority to heal from even the most deadly of diseases.

This theme of Jesus's authority over the body is made explicit and even more stark in the next miracle, when the Roman soldier compares his authority over soldiers with Jesus's authority to heal. Look at verse 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.*

This is a remarkable description of authority, a perfect example of what the word "authority" means. The Oxford Dictionary describes authority as: "power or right to enforce obedience... the right to command, or give an ultimate decision"—and that's exactly what the Centurion describes here!

But what's remarkable about the Centurion's words here is that the kind of authority he has over people, is the kind of authority he assumes Jesus has over the very molecules of the body—so much that he doesn't even need to be in the same room. His is the kind of authority that can say "go" and the leprosy goes, that can say "come" and the severed nerves come back together, that can say "do this" and the COVID-19 spike proteins dissipate. In a world where getting older often feels like losing control over your body, what a comfort it is that Jesus' authority over your body never slips away.

And his authority doesn't end with humans! We didn't read this story, but look down at the story starting in verse 23:

<sup>23</sup> Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup> Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. <sup>25</sup> The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

<sup>26</sup> He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

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<sup>1</sup> France, R.T. *The Gospel of Matthew* (New International Commentary on the New Testament), p. 306.

<sup>27</sup> The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

He rules over our bodies. He rules over all of physical creation. Matthew goes on in the next story to detail Christ’s sovereignty over the spiritual realm, as he casts demons out of two men, saying: “Go,” and the tormentors go.

The winds and the waves obey him! The ailments and molecules of our bodies obey him! Even the demons, who oppose him, are bound by his commands. No president, no prime minister, no dictator, no matter how aggressive their military—can command the wind and waves. No matter who controls Kyiv, Christ is still King.

It is this glimpse of all-encompassing authority that led Abraham Kuyper to famously say: “There is not one square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”

The authority of Jesus is ultimate, unparalleled, unlimited authority.

## **2. Jesus uses his authority for the good of his people.**

Yet, authority in and of itself is not necessarily a good thing. Authority can be abused, used selfishly, used to oppress, demonize, and destroy. We have seen this week in Eastern Europe: a pursuit of power, the need to exercise and prove one’s authority can be a horrifying thing. We have become too familiar with leaders, even church leaders, utilizing their authority to shame, to cover up, to take advantage of.

Amidst all our division, one core shared characteristic of post-modern political and societal discourse in America is a distrust of authority. Whether it’s a distrust of the federal government, religious institutions, financial institutions, or Big Tech, we’re always worried about someone, somewhere, having a dangerous amount of power.

And that is why it is such good news, friends, that Jesus always uses his authority for the good of his people.

It’s such good news, friends! It’s the question of the leper, back in verse 2: “*Lord, if you will, you can make me clean!*” The leper knows that Jesus is able to heal him, he just doesn’t know if he’s willing!

But the good news of Jesus Christ friends is that not only is he able, but he is willing. “I will, be clean.”

He says the same thing to the centurion in verse 7: “I will.” What a wonderful answer.

But the willingness of Christ is not merely limited to what he is willing to heal, but who he is willing to heal.

Note the people who are healed in these three stories: a leper, a Roman centurion, and a woman. Three of the most disadvantaged, the most marginalized categories in the ancient near east Jewish communities.

The healing of the leper is a particularly fascinating instance. Because leprosy was so contagious and without cure, God gave ancient Israel rules and instructions for how to deal with it at a societal level. You can see some of these rules and instructions in Leviticus chapters 13-14. If someone was even feared to have leprosy, they were examined by a priest and then put into a seven-day quarantine (some of you may be having COVID-19 flashbacks right now). And if the condition persisted, if it was a real case of persistent leprosy, the leper would be forced to live in isolation as long as he or she had the disease. They were social pariahs. So, you have to understand, even this man's willingness to approach Jesus—a respected Jewish teacher—was an extreme act of faith. And Jesus's willingness not only to heal him, but to touch him as well, would have been a scandal had he not healed him.

But Jesus did heal him, and then he instructs him to go to the priest, because there was a specific process of integrating a cured leper back into the community. But all of it is a reminder that part of Jesus's prerogative in utilizing his authority to heal is to reconcile the marginalized and the outcast back into the fold.

And the same thing is true of the Roman centurion! Remember, in ancient Israel, non-Jewish people were not considered a part of the people of God. They were, more often than not, the enemies of God's people. And in this case, the centurion is a manifestation of the literal enemy of God's people, a member of the occupying Roman army. It would be like a Russian soldier approaching a Ukrainian priest and asking for money to feed his family.

And what's fascinating about Jesus' response is that not only does he listen and fulfill the man's request, but he affirms the faith of the man over and above the faith of the natural Israelites, affirming his place in the kingdom of God! Jesus is not only offering healing to the people of God in his authority, but he is redefining God's people with his authority—bringing in the marginalized and the ostracized.

And Jesus's healing authority is on full display with this long night of healing in Peter's home. Look at verses 16 and 17 with me:

*“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. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.’”*

Jesus's healing, this authoritative use of power, is purposeful. It is to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”

Now, this is fascinating language, isn't it? Because there's no indication that Jesus took on and bore the actual pain and suffering of these people's ailments. Certainly, he took the suffering away from them, but at least, in the course of this narrative, it doesn't seem as if he's taken it upon himself, as if

he's "bearing" the disease in any way. Healing someone else doesn't necessarily require you to take and feel their suffering.

Now, one could say Jesus does show a willingness to suffer here. To reach out and touch a leper is risky business, given the disease's contagious nature. And his interactions with both the leper and the centurion could have had social repercussions. But a willingness to suffer is not the same as actually bearing one's sufferings.

And this prophecy from Isaiah certainly seems clear, for that line is from Isaiah 53, the prophecy of the suffering servant to come:

*Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds, we are healed.*

So, there must be more at play here! This healing of Jesus comes from his wounds, by his piercing and crushing, by his carrying of our sorrows. But how?

### **3. Jesus uses his authority to forgive his people of their sins.**

Well, let's read one more story this morning. It comes at the very beginning of chapter 9. One more display of the authority of Jesus Christ.

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. <sup>2</sup> And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." <sup>3</sup> And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." <sup>4</sup> But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? <sup>5</sup> For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? <sup>6</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." <sup>7</sup> And he rose and went home. <sup>8</sup> When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Why does Jesus give these miraculous displays of authority, brothers and sisters? Why does he exhibit this awesome power for the good of his people? To point to the one thing he came to this earth to do, the one thing that he would leave a throne room in heaven for, the one reason that Matthew has written this book. Jesus Christ came to save his people from their sins.

Jesus did many important, wonderful things, friends. His teachings are revolutionary, his miracles were unfathomable blessings. But Jesus Christ did not come primarily to teach. He did not come primarily to be a miracle worker. Jesus Christ came to forgive his people of their sins.

And forgiveness, friends, always comes at a cost.

This is something that Tim Keller has helped me immensely to see. We like to think of forgiveness as free, but it is anything but. This is what Keller says:

“If someone breaks your lamp, you could demand that she pay for it. The alternative is that you could forgive her and pay for it yourself (or go about bumping furniture in the dark). Imagine a more grave situation, namely that someone has seriously damaged your reputation. Again, you have two options. You could make him pay for this by going to others, criticizing and ruining his good name as a way to restore your own. Or you could forgive him, taking on the more difficult task of setting the record straight without vilifying him. The forgiveness is free and unconditional to the perpetrator, but it is costly to you.”

Forgiveness always comes at a cost to the forgiver.

And so, friends, when Jesus uses his authority to forgive sins, he is using his authority to suffer—to pay the cost, to bear the weight, the consequence, of someone else’s sin.

This, friends, is the real miracle of Jesus.

And this, friends, is the real ailment that you and I carry.

Sin does not only mar and defile us to the point of separating us from each other, as leprosy did, but it separates us from God, casting us out of his presence into isolation and a slow, but inevitable death. It, like paralysis, robbed the servant from serving the centurion, robs us from serving the Lord in the way we were meant to. It has created an unfathomable gap between us and God, it has broken this world, and every moment of pain and suffering in this world, every horrific world event to every bodily ache, is a built-in reminder of that reality, a warning that under the surface, we all have a far greater need than simply physical healing.

But, in Christ, we have one who has chosen to use his ultimate, unparalleled, unlimited authority to forgive us of those sins. To condescend from the throne room of heaven to this broken world and suffer and die on our behalf. On the Cross, Jesus did not merely take your sins away from you, but he bore them. On the cross, Jesus took on the sins and suffering of every single one of his people—the leprosy, the chronic pain, the fever, the infertility, the miscarriage, the guilt, the shame, the very wrath of God.

*Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.*

## **Conclusion: Application**

Before we leave this morning, then, I want to leave you with three potential steps of application. Each of these is going to depend on what exactly is going on in your heart and life right now, but I think that the healing authority of Jesus has important implications for each of us.

### **1. Submit to the all-encompassing authority of Jesus.**

Friends, if the authority of Jesus Christ encompasses every square inch of human existence, that means it covers every aspect and corner of your life. He is King over your job, over your bedroom, over your parenting, over your thoughts and even over your attitudes.

He is King, and he has claim over every part of your life, not merely Sunday afternoons and your prayers before meals.

And yet, we often have little corners that we are trying to warden off for ourselves, that we're keeping hidden away from the King. We treat Jesus like we treat the government: We want him to keep us safe, we want him to keep things nice and orderly, but we don't want him inside our house. We don't want him to tell us how to speak, dress, or watch. We certainly don't want him to tell us how to love.

But if Jesus really is King, if every knee one day really will bow, then he has authority over every part of your life. The question is not whether he has authority, it's whether or not we will recognize and submit to his authority.

And that's a painful thing. We don't like to subject ourselves to the control over somebody else. It's risky. And rightfully so! Subjecting yourself to Christ's authority will feel painful. There will be commands that are uncomfortable to keep, old idols that hurt to give up. But just as a father sometimes uses his authority to give bitter medicine to his sick son, Christ only ever uses his authority for the good of his people. His commands are not arbitrary or aimless: they are purposed for your good.

So, what area of your life needs to be subjected to Christ's authority today? A hidden addiction? Maybe simply a "neutral" thing that has become an idol? Maybe you've been coming to church out of a duty to your spouse, or an expectation that this is what we do. But Christ calls you to submit it all.

### **2. Hope in the eternal healing of Jesus**

This second thing is almost an aside, I've just been thinking about it this morning.

Some of you are sitting here today and you've gone through so much consistent suffering—maybe it's an illness, something physical. Maybe it's a relationship that you've been praying for for a long time that just can't seem to be reconciled. Maybe it's a job situation that's just exhausting and killing you. You've been praying time after time and asking the Lord for healing, and it hasn't come.

And so for you to hear that Jesus only uses his authority for your good is actually really hard to hear. It doesn't match your experience of life right now and it's painful to even think that way.

And I just want to say to you I'm sorry. And there are many faithful saints in this room who have felt those same things, had those same doubts. So, first, I just want to say that we're with you in that suffering, we're not going anywhere.

But the second thing I want to say to you is that Jesus knew! He knew his people would go through suffering—even long, intense periods of suffering! And that's why these stories are in the Bible! It's not because these stories are a prescription for what happens to everybody immediately when they meet Jesus. It's because in the midst of our suffering, we need a reminder of what the character of Jesus is. And the character of Jesus, friends, is one who looks at the leper and says "I will, be clean." Even if it doesn't feel like it right now, that's his character! He will bring an end to your suffering!

But our hope in the midst of suffering is not that he would make our lives right now comfortable and perfect and free from pain, but in our suffering, our hope in Jesus is that he is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory! That one day, you will see him face to face as the leper and the centurion and Peter's mother-in-law did. And at that moment, he will wipe away every tear and the pain will be no more.

There are a thousand different things that he might be doing in you with this suffering right now—to prepare you for that eternal weight of glory. He might be sanctifying you, making you more patient. He might be giving you an experience that one day you'll use to encourage another younger brother or sister in Christ to persevere. He might be preparing you to have joy in his presence, putting in you a deep anticipation to see him. He might need you to feel the horror of sin and suffering so that when you see him face-to-face, your joy just explodes.

I don't know exactly what Jesus is doing in you right now. But it is not accidental. The character of Jesus is not one who overlooks suffering. He is the one who looks at the sufferer and says: I will.

### **3. Receive the gracious forgiveness of Jesus.**

It is remarkable, friends, that in the midst of a man coming to him with a terrible physical ailment, Christ looked at him and saw: The thing this man needs is pure, total, utter forgiveness.

Perhaps that man, being carried to Jesus, tried to dissuade his friends from bringing him to Jesus. Perhaps he had convinced himself that he deserved this suffering, because deep down he knew all the evils, big and small, that had wormed their way from his heart into his life. "No, don't bother the Rabbi," he might have said, "He won't want to see me." Perhaps this man, being carried to Jesus, felt the pit in his stomach grow larger and larger, his acts of anger or lust or deceit or doubt weighing

heavier and heavier on his conscience. And as his friends made their way to where Jesus was, completely hopeful and optimistic, maybe this man was actually terrified of being in the presence of this Jesus, sure that the only thing he deserved was rejection.

Yet his friends brought him to the feet of Jesus and said, “Lord! Our friend is paralyzed, would you heal him?!”

And Jesus looked at him and saw all of his stored up guilt and shame, all of the turmoil within, all of the doubt and fear and he said: “Take heart, my son. Your sins are forgiven.”

Friends, when your conscience tosses to and fro, and the waves of sin crash over your soul, when Satan blows mighty winds of accusations against you, only one man can rebuke the raging storm. You cannot run from your guilt, you cannot paper over it with meaningless pleasures and endless content, no other human being can take that guilt from you, you can't defeat that guilt by mere self-love. Only one man has the authority to forgive sins and it is the same one who commands the winds and the waves.

*“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-9)*

He has promised! All you have to do is go to him, like the leper did, kneeling and say: “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” And beloved, every time, the King who has all authority in heaven and earth will respond: “I will. Be clean.”