

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
7-26-23

Matthew 8

Jesus Heals A Man With Leprosy – Verses 1-2

¹ When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ² A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

8:1-2 Leprosy, like AIDS today, was a terrifying disease because there was no known cure. In Jesus’ day, the Greek word for “leprosy” was used for a variety of similar diseases, and some forms were contagious. If a person contracted the contagious type, a priest declared him a leper and banished him from his home and city. The leper was sent to live in a community with other lepers until he either got better or died. Yet when the leper begged Jesus to heal him, Jesus reached out and touched him, even though his skin was covered with the dreaded disease.

8:1-2 Sin is also an incurable disease—and we all have it. Only Christ’s healing touch can miraculously take away our sins and restore us to real living. But first, just like the leper, we must realize our inability to cure ourselves and ask for Christ’s saving help.

Jesus Touches The Leper And He Is Cleansed – Verses 3-4

³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. ⁴ Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

8:3 Jesus put out His hand and touched him: This was a bold and compassionate touch from Jesus. The idea is that the leper kept his distance from Jesus, but He put out His hand and touched him. It was against the ceremonial law to touch a leper, which made the touch all the more meaningful to the afflicted man. Of course, as soon as Jesus touched him, he was no longer a leper!

8:3 Immediately his leprosy was cleansed: The former leper’s life was changed forever. He was not only healed, but as he requested he was cleansed. Jesus had recently said, ask and it will be given to you (Matthew 7:7). This was certainly true for the now cleansed former leper.

8:4 The law required a healed leper to be examined by the priest (Leviticus 14). Jesus wanted this man to give his story firsthand to the priest to prove that his leprosy was completely gone so that he could be restored to his community.

The Faith Of The Centurion – Verses 5-6

⁵ When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

8:5-6 The centurion could have let many obstacles stand between him and Jesus—pride, doubt, money, language, distance, time, self-sufficiency, power, race. But he didn't. If he did not let these barriers block his approach to Jesus, we don't need to either. What keeps you from Christ?

The Centurion's Understanding Of Jesus' Spiritual Authority – Verses 7-9

7 Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?" **8** The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. **9** For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

8:7-9 I will come and heal him: Jesus did not hesitate to go to the centurion's house, and we half wish the centurion would have allowed Him. It was completely against Jewish custom for a Jew to enter a Gentiles' house; yet it was not against God's law.

8:8-9 A centurion was a career military officer in the Roman army with control over 100 soldiers. Roman soldiers, of all people, were hated by the Jews for their oppression, control, and ridicule. Yet this man's genuine faith amazed Jesus! This hated Gentile's faith put to shame the pompous piety of many of the Jewish religious leaders.

Jesus Praises The Centurion's Faith And Heals His Servant – Verses 10-13

10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. **11** I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. **12** But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." **13** Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.

8:10-12 Jesus told the crowd that many religious Jews who should be in the kingdom would be excluded because of their lack of faith. Entrenched in their religious traditions, they could not accept Christ and his new message. We must be careful not to become so set in our religious habits that we expect God to work only in specified ways. Don't limit God by your mind-set and lack of faith.

8:11-12 "The east and the west" stands for the whole earth. All the faithful people of God will be gathered to feast with the Messiah (Isaiah 25:6; 55). The Jews should have known that when the Messiah came, his blessings would be for Gentiles too (see Isaiah 66:12, 19). But this message came as a shock because they were too wrapped up in their own affairs and destiny. In claiming God's promises, we must not apply them so personally or culturally that we forget to see what God wants to do to reach all the people he loves.

8:11-12 Matthew emphasizes this universal theme—Jesus' message is for everyone. The Old Testament prophets knew this (see Isaiah 56:3, 6-8; 66:12, 19; Malachi 1:11), but many New Testament Jewish leaders chose to ignore it. Each individual has to choose to accept or reject the gospel, and no one can become part of God's kingdom on the basis of heritage or connections. Having Christian parents is a wonderful blessing, but it won't guarantee you eternal life. You must believe in and follow Christ.

Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law – Verses 14-15

¹⁴ When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

8:14-15 Peter's mother-in-law gives us a beautiful example to follow. Her response to Jesus' touch was to wait on Jesus and his disciples—immediately. Has God ever helped you through a dangerous or difficult situation? If so, you should ask, how can I express my gratitude to him? Because God has promised us all the rewards of his kingdom, we should look for ways to serve him and his followers now.

Jesus Delivers Many From Sickness And Demonic Possession – Verses 16-17

¹⁶ When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases."

8:16-17 Matthew continues to show Jesus' kingly nature. Through a single touch, Jesus healed (8:3, 15); when he spoke a single word, evil spirits fled his presence (8:16). Jesus has authority over all evil powers and all earthly disease. He also has power and authority to conquer sin. Sickness and evil are consequences of living in a fallen world. But in the future, when God removes all sin, there will be no more sickness and death. Jesus' healing miracles were a taste of what the whole world will one day experience in God's kingdom.

The Cost Of Following Jesus – Verses 18-20

¹⁸ When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹ Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰ Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

8:19-20 Following Jesus is not always easy or comfortable. Often it means great cost and sacrifice, with no earthly rewards or security. Jesus didn't have a place to call home. You may find that following Christ costs you popularity, friendships, leisure time, or treasured habits. But while the cost of following Christ is high, the value of being Christ's disciple is even higher. Discipleship is an investment that lasts for eternity and yields incredible rewards.

Jesus Speaks To A Hesitant Follower About Following Him – Verses 21-22

²¹ Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ²² But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

8:21-22 It is possible that this disciple was not asking permission to go to his father's funeral but rather to put off following Jesus until his elderly father died. Perhaps he was the firstborn son and wanted to be sure to claim his inheritance. Perhaps he didn't want to face his father's wrath if he left the family business to follow an itinerant preacher. Whether his concern was financial security, family approval, or something else, he did not want to commit himself to Jesus just yet. Jesus, however, would not accept his excuse.

8:21-22 Jesus was always direct with those who wanted to follow him. He made sure they counted the cost and set aside any conditions they might have for following him. As God's Son, Jesus did not hesitate to demand complete loyalty. Even family loyalty was not to take priority over the demands of obedience. His direct challenge forces us to ask ourselves about our own priorities in following him. The decision to follow Jesus should not be put off, even though other loyalties compete for our attention. Nothing should be placed above a total commitment to living for him.

Jesus Calms the Storm – Verses 23-25

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

8:23 The boat used here was probably the kind familiar to many of Jesus' disciples who were fishermen. Josephus, an ancient historian, wrote that there were usually more than 300 fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee at one time. This boat was large enough to hold Jesus and his 12 disciples and was powered both by oars and sails. During a storm, however, the sails were taken down to keep them from ripping and to make the boat easier to control.

8:24 The Sea of Galilee is an unusual body of water. It is relatively small (13 miles long, 7 miles wide), but it is 150 feet deep, and the shoreline is 680 feet below sea level. Sudden storms can appear over the surrounding mountains with little warning, stirring the water into violent 20-foot waves. The disciples had not foolishly set out in a storm. They had been caught without warning, and their danger was great.

8:25 Although the disciples had witnessed many miracles, they panicked in this storm. As experienced sailors, they knew its danger; what they did not know was that Christ could control the forces of nature. We often encounter storms in our lives where we feel God can't or won't work. When we truly understand who God is, however, we will realize that he controls both the storms of nature and the storms of the troubled heart. Jesus' power that calmed this storm can also help us deal with the problems we face. Jesus is willing to help if we only ask him. We should never discount his power even in terrible trials.

Jesus Displays Authority Over The Creation – Verses 26-27

26 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. 27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

8:26-27 Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Jesus rebuked their fear and unbelief, not their request or waking Him. We shouldn't think that Jesus was in a bad mood from being awakened. He was upset at their fear, because fear and unbelief go together. When we trust God as we should trust Him, there is little room left for fear.

8:27 So the men marveled: The disciples were amazed. Such a powerful display over creation led them to ask, "Who can this be?" It could only be the LORD, Jehovah, who only has this power and authority: In the span of a few moments, the disciples saw both the complete humanity of Jesus (in His tired sleep) and the fullness of His deity. They saw Jesus for who He is: truly man and truly God.

Jesus Restores Two Demon-Possessed Men – Verses 28-29

28 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. **29** “What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?”

8:28 The region of the Gadarenes is located southeast of the Sea of Galilee, near the town of Gadara, one of the most important cities of the region (see map). Gadara was a member of the Decapolis (see the note on Mark 5:20), 10 towns with independent governments that were largely inhabited by Gentiles. This explains the herd of pigs (8:30), for the Jews did not raise pigs because pigs were considered unclean and thus unfit to eat.

8:28 Demon-possessed people are under the control of one or more demons. Demons are fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion against God and are now evil spirits under Satan’s control. They help Satan tempt people to sin and have great destructive powers. But whenever they are confronted by Jesus, they lose their power. These demons recognized Jesus as God’s Son (8:29), but they didn’t think they had to obey him. Just believing is not enough (see James 2:19 for a discussion of belief and demons). Faith is more than belief. By faith, you accept what Jesus has done for you, receive him as the only one who can save you from sin, and live out your faith by obeying his commands.

8:28 According to Jewish ceremonial laws, the men Jesus encountered were unclean in three ways: They were Gentiles (non-Jews), they were demon-possessed, and they lived in a cemetery. Jesus helped them anyway. We should not turn our backs on people who are “unclean” or repulsive to us or who violate our moral standards and religious beliefs. Instead, we must realize that every human individual is a unique creation of God, needing to be touched by his love. **8:29** The Bible tells us that at the end of the world the devil and his angels will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 20:10). When the demons asked if Jesus had come to torture them “before the appointed time,” they showed they knew their ultimate fate.

Jesus Casts The Demons Into A Herd Of Swine – Verses 30-34

30 Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. **31** The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.” **32** He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. **33** Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. **34** Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

8:32 When the demons entered the pigs, they drove the animals into the sea. The demons’ action proves their destructive intent—if they could not destroy the men, they would destroy the pigs. Jesus’ action, by contrast, shows the value he places on each human life.

8:34 Why did the people ask Jesus to leave? Unlike their own pagan gods, Jesus could not be contained, controlled, or appeased. They feared Jesus’ supernatural power, a power that they had never before witnessed. And they were upset about losing a herd of pigs more than they were glad about the deliverance of the demon-possessed men. Are you more concerned about property and programs than people? Human beings are created in God’s image and have eternal value. How foolish and yet how easy it is to value possessions, investments, and even animals above human life. Would you rather have Jesus leave you than finish his work in you?