

Kingdom: A Journey Through Matthew

The Kings Authority, Part 2

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The King's Authority Matthew 9

The Basic Outline of Matthew 8-9

If you have His Word, and I hope you do, I invite you to open with me to Matthew 9 and pull out those notes that you received when you came in. Matthew 9. As we pick up on part 2 of "The Authority of Jesus," and these two chapters, I put in your notes a summary of where we were last week just in case you weren't here last week, or just as a refresher even if you were here to remind you how these two chapters are tied together and how Matthew is arranging them very intentionally. We talked last week about how these two chapters have three sections with three miracle stories.

Three sections with three miracle stories.

So right at the beginning, right at the middle, and right at the end, there are three sections with three miracle stories each. And we saw the first one last week was first, Jesus healing a man with leprosy, and second, Jesus healing a centurion's servant. A centurion comes and says, "You just say the word. The servant's not even here. He's paralyzed. You say the word and he'll be healed." And so he is. Third story: healing of Peter's mother-in-law. And so you have those three stories leading into the first of two sections with two descriptions of discipleship.

Two sections with two descriptions of discipleship. And so two men come up to Jesus (Matthew 8:18-22), two men who clearly had not counted the cost of following Jesus, learned the cost of discipleship. And from all we can tell, did not follow Jesus when they realized the cost. And then, right after that, Matthew comes to the middle and we've got three miracle stories. And we looked at the first two out of three of those. We looked at Jesus calming the wind and the waves, and then we saw Jesus healing two demon-possessed men. Then that's where we stopped to set the stage. We've got one more story in this middle section, then two descriptions of discipleship, then three more stories at the end.

So I hope you see how understanding the way the Gospel writer is arranging things helps us understand what God's Word is teaching. And I hope we'll see that in some different ways tonight—why all of that is important.

The Portrait of Jesus in Matthew 8

Now the portrait of Jesus that we saw in Matthew 8, the picture of Jesus that Matthew is painting is clear, talking about we're seeing on display the authority of Jesus.

He has authority over disease, disciples, disasters, and demons He has authority over leprosy, and paralysis, and fevers—He speaks and they obey. Then we see His authority over disciples, over our lives. Then we see His authority over disasters. Jesus has authority over the wind and the waves. Jesus has authority over tornadoes and hurricanes. And then Jesus has authority over demons. And in the midst of all that, we just encouraged one another last week with the fact that there are people in here walking through cancer. There are people in here who have got tumors, going through trials of all different kinds, and we can rest in the authority of Jesus over all of these things. We can trust in His authority when we will walk through the middle of these things. We can rejoice in His authority no matter what happens to us in this world.

The Portrait of Jesus in Matthew 9

That's the portrait of Jesus we saw in Matthew 8, and just to let you know, the portrait is only going to get more beautiful in Matthew 9. Because even in all of our talk about cancer, and tumors, and tornadoes, and our community and those sorts of things, Jesus having authority over those, that kind of conversation, as important as it is, is still on the surface. We've not gotten below the surface. We've not addressed the real problem yet. And the very beginning of Matthew 9, the story we're about to read, is going to address the real problem. We're going to see the real issue addressed—an issue that is far more serious than any cancer diagnosis; far more serious than any tumor that shows up on an MRI; far more serious than any tornado that comes through your neighborhood, is the problem we're about to see addressed in Matthew 9.

So what I want us to do is much like we did last week, kind of walk step-by-step, story-by-story through Matthew 9, pausing along the way to think about what the Word is teaching us, and then put it all together at the end. So Matthew 9:1. Let's start there. Matthew writes:

"And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. 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.' And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, 'This man is blaspheming.' But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Rise and walk"? 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.' And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men."

Jesus Has Authority over Sin

As I was studying this week, this was the story that just baffled me, and I've read this story before numerous times. But I was just...I was baffled to realize...Think about this with me. This is the only time in the entire Gospel of Matthew where Jesus looks at a specific individual and says, "Your sins are forgiven," to a specific individual. This is the only time in the entire Gospel of Matthew that this happens. What's baffling to me is that this one time when this happens, the guy didn't even ask for forgiveness of sins, right? I try to put myself in this guy's shoes, or on this guy's mat, more appropriately. And so, your friends bring you in, you're paralyzed, to Jesus. The first thing He does, He looks... He's got all these healings that He's been doing. And so He looks at you and says, "Take heart My son." And you're

thinking, your friends are thinking, the scribes around you are thinking, "He's about to heal this guy of his paralysis." And He looks at you...I'm trying to picture this: Jesus looking at me, paralyzed on a mat, and He says, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Now what's going through my mind? I'm probably thinking, "Uh, okay. That's not really what I was looking for but I'll take that." It's not what anybody was looking for. Friends weren't thinking this. The scribes clearly weren't thinking this. And this is where I think we unlock the heart of this story. When Jesus says, "Son, your sins are forgiven," what He is saying to this guy is, "Son, you have far deeper problems than paralysis. And the deeper issue in your life deals with sin." And we see Jesus with authority over sin.

So that's the first thing we see about Jesus in Matthew 9. Now a lot of people in the 1st century, we've got to understand, would have equated paralysis or different disabilities with sin. For example, in John 9 when a man is born blind, he's brought to Jesus; the first question people ask is, "Whose sin is to blame for this man's blindness? Is it this man's sin or is it his parents' sin? Somehow this disability is clearly caused by sin. So, the question is whose sin is it?" Okay, if somebody has a disability then clearly somebody's sin is there. And this paralyzed man may have thought that and Scripture tells us that there are situations where physical struggles are attributable to specific sins in people's lives. So it's possible that he was paralyzed as a result of some sin in his life. We don't know. Or sin in somebody else's life. We don't know. The text doesn't tell us that. But the point of the text is clear. There is an issue here that is deeper than paralysis. And it takes us back to what we touched on briefly last week. We talked real briefly about how all suffering, no matter what form it takes, is a product of sin in the world. We talked about Genesis 1 and 2— no suffering. Genesis 3—sin enters the world, and as a result we have suffering after that.

So what we're seeing in all these miracles then brings us to a...Comes to a head here in Matthew 9, where Jesus makes it crystal clear that His authority penetrates to the root of all suffering. And the root of all suffering is sin. All. All suffering. All of our physical struggles, all of our physical suffering, all of our physical pain, in addition to emotional struggles, spiritual struggles. They all go back to the fact that we have sin and we are separated from our Creator. All of suffering goes back either to sin in your life, specifically. So I mentioned last week and I want to mention again, much of the suffering in our lives is due to specific sin in our lives. When we disobey God, when we flirt with sin, we will suffer. You can mark that down. We will suffer the consequences of sin, and those consequences are painful. Even the discipline of God out of His love and mercy toward us is painful to draw us away from sin.

So there are many of us in this room tonight who are suffering in our lives right now directly because of specific sin in our lives. And the good news here is that Jesus came to deal with that sin, and He has authority over that sin that's at the root of your life. And He wants to use even suffering in your life to pull you away from that sin so that you hate it all the more and you run all the faster from it. So either sin in your life or all suffering goes back to sin in the world. Again, this would be Job-like suffering. So sometimes we suffer not due to some specific sin in our life, but due to the fact that we live in a fallen, diseased, decaying, sinful world. And the point of the passage is no matter what kind of suffering we experience, Jesus is dealing with the root of it all. You cannot deal with disease and demons and disasters ultimately without dealing with sin. So Jesus goes to the root here. And this is huge. What's next I've put in your notes here, is so huge for us to realize. Don't miss this. Our ultimate need is never physical. Sometimes we think it is, but our ultimate need is never physical. Our ultimate need is always spiritual, no matter what type of suffering we are experiencing.

So you think about the first kind that we talked about. If you're suffering as a result of some specific sin or sins in your life, whatever that suffering looks like, the need that needs to be addressed is spiritual, right? We need to address an issue at the core of our relationship with God. At the same time, you think about suffering that's not due to specific sin in your life. You think about... maybe go back to the illustration I've been using—familiar to many, cancer—walking through cancer. Maybe this cancer is not specifically attributable to some specific sin in your life. At the same time, your need even amidst cancer is ultimately still spiritual more than it is physical. The root here is spiritual. What's most important, what's ultimate, is your relationship with God in the middle of cancer.

We see this in 2 Corinthians 12, right? Paul has a thorn in the flesh that he's asking Jesus over-and-over-and-over again to take away, and the Lord says, "No." We don't know what the thorn in the flesh was, but the Lord says, "No, I'm not going to take it away, because you have a deeper need in your life, Paul. The deeper need in your life is to see My grace as your sufficiency; My strength in your weakness. That is more important than having this thorn in the flesh taken away."

Now understanding this brings us to the good news of the kingdom—understanding that our ultimate need is never physical. Our ultimate need is always spiritual. It brings us to the good news of the kingdom. What we're seeing in these passages here, Matthew 8, Matthew 9, over and over again what we're seeing is Jesus' deity on display. There's only One Who can calm the wind and the waves, and that's God. And so Jesus is clearly...What the picture we're getting here is Jesus is God. There's only One Who speaks and diseases obey. That's God. Jesus is God. And that's why the scribes just go nuts when Jesus says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." They say He's blaspheming. Only God can forgive sins. So Jesus is clearly equating Himself with God.

And that's the good news of the Kingdom! Jesus is God. The King...That's the whole point we're seeing in Matthew 8 and 9. The King has come! And follow this: the good news—the gospel of the kingdom—is ultimately not that Jesus will heal you of all your sicknesses. That's not the good news of the kingdom. Let me pause for a second. I'm not saying that God doesn't sometimes do that. Sometimes God does heal us of our diseases. And that is good. There are brothers and sisters in this faith family who have been healed of major sicknesses—miraculously healed—and we give God glory for that. James 5 says we pray for that. We gather the elders around them and we pray. We do that as elders. We pray specifically for people who are walking through very difficult challenges physically, and we've seen God do wonderful things.

So that's good, but at the same time, that is not the good news of the kingdom, that Jesus will heal you of all your sicknesses. We do not go to Africa and say, "Trust in Christ and all your HIV/AIDS will be gone. That's not true. And we don't go into America and say, "Trust in Christ and your cancer will be gone." That is not true. We talked about that last week. The good news of the kingdom is not that Jesus will heal all of your diseases, your sicknesses, but that Jesus will forgive you of all your sins, and that is what we need most.

More than you and I need to be healed of cancer, we need to be forgiven of sin. More than you need a tumor removed, you need sin forgot. That's our deepest need because when that happens, when sin is forgiven, then we are reconciled to God and the root is severed. And we know at that moment that cancer, and tumors and whatever struggles we have in this world are temporary. To use Paul's language in 2 Corinthians 4, "Our outward bodies may waste away but our inward self, we will be renewed day-by-day-by-day."

I saw this in my mother-in-law this last year. To see her saved, and just to pause after those two testimonies in baptism, my mother-in-law, people who have grown up in church,

have been in church, and have never realized the depth of their sinfulness and their need for Christ. Let that be a wake-up call for people in this room tonight who are in the same boat, walking through religious routine, and religious tradition, let tonight be the night where you open your eyes for the first time to the fact that you cannot earn the favor of God. You cannot earn the forgiveness of God. Christ alone can save you. Trust in Him.

And so I see my mother-in-law do this after 50 plus years of saying she's a Christian in religious routine, she realizes the grace and mercy of Christ. She is saved. She's born again. And God gives her a new heart. Her whole heart just transformed, turned upside down! And the fruit of that...You see that in her life. And at the same time that that's happening, you see her body just wasting away with diabetes, breast cancer, neuropathy, degenerative eye disease, hand surgeries, feet pain, kidney failure, ultimately massive bleeding in her brain—outer self, wasting away. Inner self being renewed day-by-day because the root of suffering, sin, had been severed in her life. And she had hope. She knew that because the root of sin had been severed even when her body stopped breathing, glory belonged to her, because the root had been addressed in her heart and her life.

Don't miss this. Forgiveness is God's greatest gift because it meets our greatest need. And that is the central message of Christianity. That God will forgive your sins through Jesus. And there is no greater news in all the world than that. So you go back last week, we talked about prosperity gospel: "Trust in Jesus and health, wealth will come your way." Do not buy it! It's false teaching. And it's not good news. There's much *better* news than that! The better news is, "Trust in Jesus and you will be made right before God." And the deepest need in your heart will be met in the forgiveness of your sins, reconciled to God forever. And you don't have to worry about whether or not you have cancer, tumors, this-or-that in this life because glory is coming for the next trillion, trillion, trillion years. And you'll just be getting started.

That's really, really good news. So trust in the One Who has authority over sin. Let Him sever the root of suffering, which is sin in your heart. If you never trusted in Jesus to forgive you of all your sin, to wipe the slate clean in your heart, I urge you to do that! And if you have, I urge you to proclaim that as the good news of the kingdom and nothing else but that.

Jesus Has Authority to Save

That leads into the next story. Jesus has authority over sin, and Jesus has authority to save. All right, verse 9.

"As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when he heard it, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Okay, let's stop there. This is the first description of discipleship and we're going to get to the next one in a second. The Call of Matthew. So you have Matthew, called Levi in other gospel accounts, a tax-collector—somebody who rubs shoulders with unclean gentiles all the time, who hangs out with the untouchables in a very real sense. And Jesus (I love this), Jesus is surrounded by crowds. There are all kinds of people that are flocking. He's getting

attention with all these things. And amidst all these crowds of people, you see Jesus walking along the road and He makes a bee-line to the tax collector's booth. He makes a bee-line to the guy who would be looked at as unclean, outsider—a guy who takes advantage of God's people by working for Rome and then padding his own pockets. Jesus makes a bee-line for him amidst all these people, for Matthew and says, "Follow Me."

So follow this. Jesus pursues sinners. You just can't help but think about the day when God opened your heart to grace and mercy in Christ, can you? To think that, oh not even just that day, but Ephesians 1, "Before the foundation of the world God the Father set His affection on your soul." And Jesus, the whole point of His coming, He pursues sinners; He summons sinners to Himself. He says, "Follow Me." The same words we saw in Matthew 4 when Jesus spoke to Peter, Andrew, James, and John. "Follow Me," and they carried the exact same weight as they did with them. You think about all that Matthew was leaving behind here: his post, his position, and his possessions. Most people think that tax collectors were fairly wealthy because of the profit that was involved in their business that they could determine and manage. And you've got Matthew leaving all that behind. Surely his position would be filled pretty soon by the Roman government. Then what is he going to do after that if this following Jesus thing doesn't work out? Who's going to hire a former tax collector? Leaving behind safety, security, the stuff in his life. Leaves behind all of it to follow Jesus.

Jesus summons sinners. But what I love is the way Matthew...Remember Matthew's the one who is writing this. The way Matthew describes this. He doesn't describe this whole thing as this picture of grim resignation. "Okay, I guess if I have to," or "I guess in eternity it makes sense to save my skin to follow Jesus so all right, I'll follow Him. I don't really want to let go of all this stuff." No, what Matthew does as the first picture he gives us after following Jesus. The first picture he gives us is a party with Jesus!

He pursues sinners, He summons sinners, and He satisfies sinners. This is such a wonderful picture of what it means to follow Jesus. Now the Pharisees did not think it was a wonderful picture because these are the kind of people that they ignored—ignored sinners. They stayed away from tax collectors and other people who weren't ceremonially, culturally clean like them. Side note: may that never be the case in this faith family! May we never be a people that are so consumed with our religious routine that we turn a deaf ear to the outcast, and the down-trodden and those who we would label sinners. May we love prostitutes. May we love homosexual men and women. May we love an alcoholic. May we love, knowing that we were once dead in sin and it's only by the mercy of God that we are not immersed in sin ourselves. May we never lose sight of that, and may that be a fabric of our faith family.

The reality is, Jesus says, "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*" More than sick people need a doctor, sinful people need a redeemer. And this is why Jesus came. He quotes from Hosea to make clear that He came to change sinners' hearts. He didn't come to prop up people who think they're righteous by their religious tradition and their ritualistic worship. He came to change sinners' hearts.

Which leads to the next description in the discipleship, the question about fasting in verse 14.

"Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will

fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

Let's think about this. Two levels. First—why disciples of Jesus didn't fast then. Why were Jesus' disciples not fasting? That's the big question that provokes this conversation. And listen to Jesus' response. Let's think about this together. Verse 15: "*Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?*" Okay, think about this question. "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" What is Jesus saying here? Well, on one level Jesus is clearly linking, associating fasting with mourning, right? And it makes sense when you think about even Old Testament picture of a fast, you'd see fast among the people of God when they were engrossed in sin. "We need to fast and repent of our sin." You see people fasting in the midst of desperate circumstances. So fasting is associated with people who are walking through something and things aren't right. "We're going to fast." So, fasting associated with mourning. All right? Hold on to that. And then He says, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?" So what He's using here is wedding imagery that revolves around a groom. Which is interesting when you realize Old Testament, God had described Himself as bridegroom for His people Israel, the bride.

We don't have time to turn to these places; you might write them down. Hosea 2:16:

"And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,'...And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD."

The whole picture here is a relationship between a groom and his bride. Isaiah 62:5: "*...As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.*" So there are promises in the Old Testament that God would draw His people like a bride to a groom. So this is the imagery. This is incredible! Do you realize what Jesus is saying here? When it says "the bridegroom... Why would wedding guests mourn when the bridegroom is with them?" What Jesus is saying here is, "The groom is here! (i.e. I'm the groom)." And so the wedding guests are not going to mourn.

You go to a wedding, you don't see the wedding guests sitting around mourning, weeping. No, you see them celebrate with the groom. And so we don't fast, disciples—disciples of Jesus—don't fast here in Matthew 9, and all this time that they're with Jesus because the groom is here, and so there's no reason to fast! The whole picture is...Listen, for centuries and generations, the people of God have longed, have mourned, have fasted and prayed for the day when the King would come, for the day when the Groom would come. They've waited for this. For 1,000 years they've waited for this! And after 1,000 years of waiting, the King had finally come. So this was not a time to fast. This was a time to feast! And everything was changing here.

That leads us to those next two illustrations when Jesus says, "You don't put un-shrunk cloth, new cloth, on an old garment. You'll make it tear worse. You don't put new wine into old wine skins. It won't be able to hold it." So Jesus is saying, "With My coming, God is doing something new here." This was not just a revision or an update on a Jewish religious system. This is a transformation of everything! And as a result there is no need to fast

because the King, the Lord, the Husband, the Groom is here, and He's making a way for people to come to God. So rejoice! Celebrate! Have a feast! Don't fast!

But then, notice what Jesus says at the end of verse 15. He says, "*The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.*" And this leads us to why disciples of Jesus do fast now and even then after Jesus died on the cross, rose from the grave (Acts 1:11). Jesus has ascended into heaven and the angel of the Lord promises and says, "Don't be afraid. Just as you saw Him taken up from you, He will come back in the same way." That is the promise in Acts 1:11. So then, you get to Acts 13 and guess what they're doing? They're fasting. Acts 14, they're fasting. 2 Corinthians 6, fasting. 2 Corinthians 11, fasting. Different places in the New Testament, you see the church fasting. Why? Why are they mourning now? I mean, the King has come! He's died on the cross. He's risen from the grave. He's conquered sin. Why do we need to fast?

Well, this is where we realize that there is a significant difference between Old Testament fasting and New Testament fasting. Old Testament fasting, all it was was looking forward. All it was was looking forward. We are anticipating, hungering, longing, aching for the day when the King will come. We're mourning, fasting, praying (Nehemiah 1), looking for God's grace in the King to come. So that's what they were doing. It's all looking forward.

When you get to New Testament fasting though, everything is different. New Testament fasting is looking backward and forward, right? New Testament fasting is looking back and seeing, "Yes, the King has come. Yes, we have reason to rejoice and celebrate. He's conquered sin; He's conquered death; He's conquered the grave. And we have tasted the satisfaction of Christ in the King Who has come." At the same time, there is longing looking forward because we know that what we've tasted and what we've seen in Christ, we know there is more to come. It's not that we're mourning because we don't have any satisfaction. No. We've got satisfaction in Christ. At the same time, now this is where we realize, why understanding how Matthew 8 and 9 are put together, and the whole structure of this thing is so important. Because if you just take Matthew 9:14-17 out of this context, rip it out of its context, just look at it by itself, you'll miss the point.

Matthew puts this picture of Jesus talking about mourning, and fasting, and feasting right here in the middle of nine different miracle stories where we see people struggling with disease, and sickness, and natural disaster, and demons. And the reality is we today live in a world where we are surrounded by disease, and sickness, and natural disasters, and struggling. And yes, we have tasted and seen that Christ is good. At the same time, we know that we are not home yet. We know that something better is coming. We know that the Christ whom we have seen and been satisfied in, one day is coming back and He's going to fully and finally assert His authority over all these things. And there will be no more suffering, and no more sickness, and no more pain, and no more sin. And that's what we fast for. We long for that.

So there's mourning and longing for that. There's rejoicing in the past. This is why disciples of Jesus fast now, because those who celebrate the ascension of the King, who know that He's ascended into Heaven, that He's coming back, we crave the consummation of the Kingdom. We long for that. Don't we long for that? This world is not our home. We are longing for the day when we will not be talking about cancer anymore. And we won't be talking about tumors anymore. We won't talk about struggles emotionally and relationally anymore. We won't be battling with sin anymore. Don't you long for that day? So fast, knowing we've tasted and seen, and there's more to come.

Jesus Has Authority Over Death

And that leads into the...It only gets better. Verse 18:

"While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.'"

So see this. Dads, put yourself in the story here. Your daughter has just died—your young daughter. He's pleading. "Come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

"And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, 'If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.' Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And instantly the woman was made well. And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, 'Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went through all that district."

See? I told you. It gets better. Jesus has authority over death. A ruler comes to Jesus and says, "My daughter is dead. You have authority to make her live." Jesus rises. He's on the way. This woman, who for 12 years has struggled physically—not just physically, but spiritually. It would have made her ceremonially unclean, completely unable to participate in the Jewish religious life of worship and practice. Socially ostracized; to touch someone who is unclean is to be unclean. So separated from people for 12 years and nobody has been able to do anything about it. And the language here, it's almost like she's coming and just saying over-and-over to herself, "If only I could touch just a piece of His garment...If only, I'll be healed." And Jesus gives hope in the midst of despair. In a sea of people, a woman who has tried everything for help, comes to Jesus, touches His garment, He stops, turns around, and says, "Take heart, My daughter." This language of affection. "Your faith has made you well."

I just can't help but think when I see this story, I see Jesus stop and give attention to this woman. I just want to remind you, child of God tonight, amidst your struggle, whatever it might be—your struggles physically, or emotionally, or relationally—know this: despite the fact that there are all kinds of people suffering all around the world, Jesus is familiar with your struggles, and you have His attention. You just let that soak in right where you're sitting. You have the attention of Jesus in your life. It's not in some unhealthy way where you think you're the center of the world, but in a really healthy way where you realize that Jesus' love, and grace, and compassion, and mercy is immensely personal. And He knows amidst those moments of despair, and loneliness, where you feel like nobody else understands. Know this—He understands! He is familiar with your pain in a way that nobody else in this world is. And He is committed as your Lord and Savior to meeting the deepest needs of your heart in the middle of your struggle. That's really good news. I hope that encourages you. Even in a room full of people tonight to think that you cannot get lost in the crowd when it comes to Christ. You have His attention. He brings hope in the middle of despair.

And He brings life in the midst of death. So this just takes the cake, doesn't it? A funeral has begun. Flute players brought in. Mourners officially assembled. And Jesus says, "You are not necessary here. Go home." Can you imagine sitting at a funeral, there's a coffin in

the front? Somebody walks in and says, "You guys do not need to be here." I mean, people are mourning; they're crying. And He says, "She's just asleep." That's what they did. They laughed at Him as if to say, "You've not seen what we've seen." And Jesus, when He says, "She's just asleep," He's not saying, "Well, she's just taking a nap." Jesus knows she's dead. Jesus knows she's dead. But the reality is, with Jesus, her death is temporary. And so He moves people out, He goes in, He takes her hand, and this girl...Just imagine. A coffin! Dead! Rises up and walks.

That's good to know that Jesus has authority over death. It just makes sense, right, for Him to have authority over disease, natural disasters, and demons? He's the One Who severs the root of all suffering and has authority over sin. It only makes sense that He has authority over death itself, an authority that will be all the more evident chapters later when He goes to the cross and He dies there. He doesn't just take a nap; He dies. And for three days His heart is flat-lined. And after three days of flat-lining, Jesus comes to life on His own authority (John 10). "No one takes My life from Me. I lay it down on My own authority and I have authority to pick it right back up again." And He does. And He rises from the grave. Yes!

HIV/AIDS does not have the last word, and cancer does not have the last word, and Parkinson's doesn't have the last word, and Alzheimer's doesn't have the last word, and tornadoes don't have the last word, and neither do hurricanes or earthquakes or demons or disease. Death does not have the last word. Jesus always has the last word. He has shown He has the last word with resurrection from the grave.

Canadian scientist, G.B. Hardy, one time he said,

"When I looked at religion, I said, 'I have two questions: one: has anybody ever conquered death? And two: if they have, did they make a way for me to conquer death?' So I checked the tomb of Buddha and it was occupied. And I checked the tomb of Confucius and it was occupied. And I checked the tomb of Muhammad and it was occupied. And I came to the tomb of Jesus and it was empty. And I said, 'There is One Who has conquered death.' And I asked the second question. 'Did He make a way for me to do it?' And I opened the Bible and discovered that He had said, 'Because I live, you shall live also.'"

Brothers and sisters, death is real; death is sobering; death is serious; death is immensely painful. But with Jesus, death is always temporary. It's always, always temporary. "To live is Christ. To die is gain." To die is good when you're with the One Who has authority over death.

Jesus Has Authority Over Disability

Two more stories. We'll hit them briefly. Verse 27.

"And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David.' When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then he touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith be it done to you.' And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, 'See that no one knows about it.' But they went away and spread his fame through all that district."

Jesus has authority over disability. Two blind men want to see. Hear what they say here. "Have mercy on us, Son of David." Have mercy on us Son of David. So see here, Jesus is

gently merciful amidst our suffering, amidst your suffering. Jesus is gentle and He is merciful. And He is the Promised Messiah. This is the first time in the book of Matthew that someone apart from Matthew describes Jesus as the Son of David. That takes us all the way back to Matthew 1:1 which is how Matthew introduced Jesus. It says, "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*" The Son of David is the promised Messiah. These guys realized Who Jesus is. They know. Old Testament promise Isaiah 35, "*The eyes of the blind shall be opened*" when He comes. And so they reason, "He's the Messiah, Son of David. We're blind. Therefore, He can open our eyes." Isn't it interesting? Think about it. Even in their blindness they were able to see what Pharisees and scribes and teachers of the law, and so many in these crowds, were unable to see. God, open our eyes to see Jesus for Who He is. He has authority over disability.

Jesus Has Authority Over the Devil

And then lastly, last story. Jesus has authority over the devil. The last story in these two chapters is a demon-possessed, a mute man, many people believe deaf as well, unable to speak, and unable to hear. Specifically in this situation, because he's oppressed by a demon, verse 32 says,

"As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, 'Never was anything like this seen in Israel.' But the Pharisees said, [listen to what they say] 'He casts out demons by the prince of demons.'"

Now let's think about this. Obviously this doesn't mean anyone who is mute or deaf, or has any disability for that matter, is oppressed by a demon. The Bible never ever teaches that. But, the picture here, and we're going to see this more in Matthew 11 and 12. Well, turn over to Matthew 11 real quick. I'll do a little preview—a little snapshot. Matthew 11:2. And we'll talk about this more when we get there. But John the Baptist is in prison and he sends some people. Listen to this.

"When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?' [In other words, 'Are You the Messiah that is to come?'] And Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.'"

Is that not just a summary of Matthew 8 and 9? And the reason that's so significant is you might write this down. Isaiah 35 (I mentioned it real briefly. I quoted from it.) Isaiah 35:3-6, one of the places, Old Testament, talking about God coming to His people in the Messiah. Isaiah 35:3.

*"Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who have an anxious heart,
'Be strong; fear not!
Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.'*

*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy."*

So the whole promise says, "The Messiah will come, and He will usher in a day; He will give us a foretaste of His Kingdom. Blind people seeing. Mute people speaking. Lame people walking. A foretaste of what is to come in the fullness of His Kingdom." And the conclusion the Pharisees have is, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." In other words, "This is demonic what He is doing." They miss the whole point. The whole point that we're seeing here in Jesus' ministry on earth is that Satan has been defeated. We're going to see this in Matthew 12. He is here to bind up Satan—to show victory over Satan. That's the whole picture we're seeing here. Satan, sin, and all of its effects—Jesus has authority over all of them. Satan has been defeated which makes His promise for eternity clear: Satan will be destroyed. Brothers and sisters, there is coming a day when Satan will be cast down and his sting will never, ever be felt again because of Jesus' authority over him. So do you see this? Put it all together.

Bottom Line of Matthew 8 and 9

Jesus Possesses Absolute Authority in the World

Bottom line in Matthew 8 and 9. We talked about this some last week. Bottom line here. Jesus has authority—absolute authority in the world, which means two takeaways here. One, which means He reigns over us supremely. He is Lord over us. We don't make Him Lord. We submit to His lordship. Who are you to tell Jesus what should happen with your life? This is Jesus. Who am I? When we are wandering in sin, help us to realize, O God, help us to realize that Your ways are better than our ways. Help us to turn, to submit to Your supreme reign over us. His ways are always best. When we are walking in the midst of suffering, and difficulty, and trial, physically, emotionally, whatever it might be, to know that His wisdom is higher than our wisdom. We may not understand why things are going on the way they are. We may not understand why the tumor is showing up on the MRI. But we know that He reigns over us supremely.

Do you realize just the security this brings in the sovereign authority of Christ? There's nothing—there is absolutely nothing that will happen to you this week, Christian, there is nothing that will happen to you this month, there is nothing that will happen to you this year—that will catch Jesus by surprise. There's not a moment that you will face in the next year and beyond. There's not a moment that you will face this week where King Jesus will not be on the throne ruling over it all.

He reigns over us supremely. And the beauty is, as He reigns over us supremely, He loves us deeply. So see how this showcase of authority in Matthew 8 and 9 is not selfish, it's *selfless*. Jesus is commanding people, "Don't tell anyone." His purpose is not to draw a crowd for Himself. His purpose is to save sinners for God—that's why He came to pursue, summon, to satisfy sinners. This King...And it would not be good news that He has all authority, and yet He did not love us and care for us. So the good news is the One Who has all authority over all the universe has compassion and love and mercy for you. He loves us deeply. Just let it soak in. The King Who has authority over sin, death, demons, disease, disasters, this King *loves you*. Just let it soak in. Don't gloss over that. Let it amaze you. If it doesn't amaze you, you don't have a pulse. That's good news.

Jesus Warrants Absolute Allegiance From the World

Jesus possesses absolute authority in the world and He warrants absolute allegiance from the world. So did you notice in these stories there were three types of people that we saw? On one hand we saw the crowds watching all of this take place. And the crowds revere Jesus. First miracle in this chapter, Matthew 9: the crowd saw it, they were afraid. Last miracle: crowd saw it, they marveled. So Matthew gives us a picture here of crowds who were being attached to Jesus, who were following Jesus. But at the same time they're following Him, they're admiring Him, they're revering Him from a distance. And very few from these crowds will be with Him along a dusty, difficult road to a cross in Jerusalem. Mark it down. The praise of man is passing, and crowds are fickle. Don't be impressed by crowds or the praise of men. And don't miss the danger here. It's what we heard reflected in these testimonies of sitting back your entire life and revering Jesus from a distance.

The crowds revere Him. The proud reject Him. These are the scribes, Pharisees, teachers of the Law—they thought they were counted among the righteous. It's a spirit that's reflected all across the world today. It's a spirit that's so often reflected in my own heart, and I know it's reflected in hearts across this room. This is the spirit of the self-sufficient who say, "I don't need Jesus." The spirit of the self-sufficient who say, "I can do this on my own and I will not humble myself before Him."

If that is you, let me urge you tonight, let me urge us: Do not be proud in the presence of Christ. We talked about last week faith is humble submission to the authority of Christ Jesus. Humbly submit your life. And if you're wandering off in sin, submit! His ways are better! Submit to His authority! His ways are better! They're good! If you're struggling in suffering and you're wondering why this is happening, submit to His authority. Even when you've got a million questions, trust in His authority instead of saying, "I know better what should happen here." It's pride. Instead, be among the faithful who renounce everything to follow Him.

The Personal Question from Matthew 8-9

Obviously, we see that in Matthew, but even in this leper and this centurion, this paralyzed man and his friends, and sick woman, and grieving dad, and blind man. They all realize, "We need Jesus." And they're full of faith in Him. Faithful. Full of faith. Renouncing themselves and saying, "We need You." This is where... So here's the personal question. You might write it down. And even if you do, regardless or whether not, just let it soak in a couple of seconds. So don't write it down and then start putting up your notes and then whatever. Just let it saturate for a minute. I just want to ask a question that I think is dictated and necessitated by these two chapters from every one of us in this room. So here's the question: In your life, do you, will you gladly submit to the authority of Jesus? Submit to His authority, not reluctantly, but gladly, knowing His ways are best. His wisdom is higher than yours, and He can be trusted as the One Who reigns over you and loves you deeply. That's the whole essence of what we celebrate in the Lord's Supper. Jesus has met our deepest need through His death on a cross. He has come to forgive us of our sins, to save sinners. And if we can trust Him to do that, then certainly we can trust Him in every other area of our lives.

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