

Lesson 7: Chapter 8 [Have faith]

Servant's preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_08.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson, Matthew chapter 7, Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount. It primarily focuses on Jesus' teachings about judging others, emphasizing that people should not condemn others while overlooking their own faults; it warns against false prophets who can be identified by their actions, not just words; additionally, Jesus emphasizes the importance of living a life based on His teachings, comparing it to building a house on a solid foundation to withstand storms, and encourages seeking God's kingdom first and foremost.

Memory verse:

8:2 "And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.""

Lesson opener:

In today's lesson, we will see Jesus, with all kindness, touching a leper who has been rejected and outcast from society and looked down upon. Jesus did not just respond to his request to be healed but He touched him with great love.

Let us role-play or discuss how we could show love for others in these situations. Make up some of your own situations!

- A new family has moved into your neighborhood.
- Some kids are being "mean" to another kid at school.
- A visitor who doesn't know anyone at church comes to class.
- A colleague at your work is sick and can't leave the house.

What acts of love can you show in these cases? [How to act like Jesus?]

Lesson Goal:

Our lesson goal is to demonstrate Jesus' power and authority through a series of miracles, primarily focusing on his ability to heal various diseases and even control nature, thereby showcasing His divine nature.

Lesson body:

Matthew chapters 8 and 9 contain the second narrative section of the Gospel. This section relates 10 miracles that take place at or near either the town of Capernaum or by the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Six of them are in this chapter [ch 8]:

1. The cleansing of a leper (8:1-4)
2. The healing of the centurion's servant (8: 5-13)
3. The healing of Simon-Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15)
4. The healing of people possessed by demons (8:16-17)
5. The calming of the storm at sea (8:23-27)
6. The healing of the Gadarene demoniacs (8:28-34)

In those two chapters, we see a succession of "miracles" not less remarkable than His teachings in the sermon on the mount; those miracles confirmed beyond any doubt the impression made by His sermon that He was sent from God.

1st miracle: Jesus Cleanses a Leper (8:1-4)

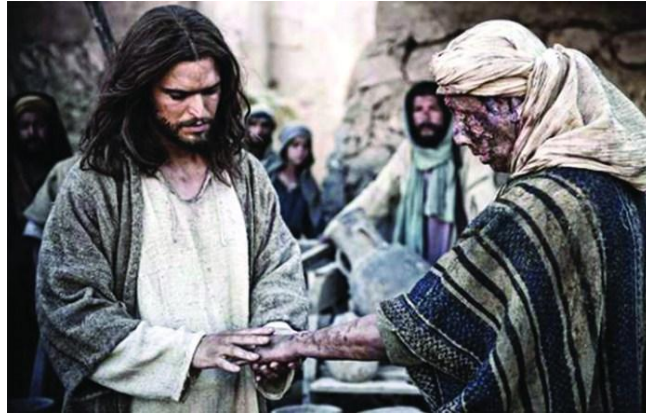
Jesus didn't have time to rest – He had just finished delivering the most famous sermon in the history of the world then people followed Him as He came down the mountain. A leper approached Him asking for healing. Jesus didn't apologize that He was tired but gave the guy all the time and attention he needed.

Leprosy was a dreadful, contagious, and hopeless disease, it changes the skin to white color and causes parts of the body to fall off. The leper, by the law of Moses, was regarded unclean, and was separated from the people.

Even though He was always busy, somehow Jesus always made time for everything. He made time to pray, even with all the needy crowds often following Him around. He made time to talk with His disciples and answer their questions. He made time to go with Jairus to help his daughter. And even on the way when his daughter was in critical condition, He made time to stop and talk with the sick lady who had the bleeding problem. Jesus is never too busy to help people. As a human, He had limited time each day like we do and many more pressing needs. And He still made time for others. He did so because He valued each individual person, young and old, male and female, poor and rich, healthy or sick.

We see three important things in the leper's request:

1. Humility: He knelt down and called Him "Lord".
2. Submission: "if You are willing"
3. Faith: "You can me clean"



This is the way we should approach God when we pray. We should treat Him with the respect He deserves. We should appeal to Him. We should ask kindly and politely for His help. And we should be willing to take “no” for an answer if it is not God’s will to say, “yes.”

Jesus was willing – He does what is best for us. No obstacle is too big. If we do not get what we pray for it is not because He is unable, but it is because He is unwilling. And if He is unwilling it is because it is not good for us.

No one was allowed to touch a leper. The act of Jesus putting forth His hand and touching him, therefore, expressed the intention of Jesus to cure him, and was a pledge that he was, in fact, already cured. What Jesus did was a profound example of His love for the alien, the ostracized, the discarded of society.

He told him to show himself to the priest to obey the laws of God and make proper acknowledgments by an offering. Just as we repent our sins in front of God in prayer then go the priest for confession to get the forgiveness and permission to take communion.

2nd Miracle: Jesus Heals a Centurion’s Servant (8:5-13)

Jesus asks him, “shall I come and heal him?” – It is not an accident that Jesus asked that. It is not something He normally asked. But Jesus knew this man’s heart and He wanted to use him as an example to all the people watching so He gave him an opportunity to proclaim his faith publicly. The centurion was humble – He realized that he was unworthy. He was a good person too. It was not common for Romans to care for the servants in the first place. He said : “only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.”

Not even Martha (Jn 11:21) thought that Jesus could have saved her brother Lazarus without going to him. The centurion’s faith was great. He had full confidence in the ability of Jesus to heal his servant and requested Him simply to give the command.

There was something different and very important about this man. Even though the world thought highly of him, he knew that Jesus was different from the world. He saw something in Jesus that set Him apart. What was it he saw in Jesus? Something he saw in Jesus made him trust completely in the power of Jesus to heal. It was something that he understood because he was a soldier. He

understood authority. What is authority? "Authority" is having not only the power but the right to rule and make decisions, to have control over how things are done. This centurion recognized that Jesus has absolute authority. The centurion relied on Jesus to help him in a hopeless situation. He knew Jesus was worthy of his faith.

It is through faith in Jesus that we invite Him into our circumstances and say, "not my way, Jesus, but Your way!" We need to recognize that we are helpless and hopeless without Him.

Jesus also alludes to the fact that many Gentiles will believe while many Jews will not accept.

3rd Miracle: St. Peter's Mother-in-Law Healed:(8:14-15)- 4th Miracle: healing the demon possessed.

We can learn a good example from this lady as she immediately begins to serve others. She was not focused on herself even after her sickness, but she was focused on serving her guests. She was being a good host and was exercising hospitality. We too should show hospitality to others.

Many were healed in the evening: The sick were diseased in body; the demoniacs were spiritually diseased.

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)

First a "certain scribe" (religious scholar) asks if he can tag along as Jesus sails across the lake to the east side. Jesus tells him that they're not going to take an easy route to a Marriott Hotel; discipleship has its hardships.

Jesus told the man about the cost of following Jesus. He wanted him to understand the cost at the beginning. One potential cost is no place to call home. No house. No security (in this world). No stability (in this world.)

Another follower-to-be tries to beg off for a while, until his father's funeral. Jesus in effect tells him that the boat is leaving climb aboard now or get left behind. These seem to be rather terse words, but some scholars believe the man spoke in a figure of speech. His father may not have really been dead at the time. The would-be disciple meant that he would follow Jesus when he had completed all his duties to his family, which could be many years in the future. Jesus knew a lame excuse when He saw one and challenged the man to put following Him ahead of his family ties.

What do you think of this request? Reasonable? Satan always tempts us to want to delay serving God in the future. What are some reasons why people delay? We should not wait for a more convenient time. It will never be convenient to serve God. How can you serve God more now?

This guy was putting his parents first in front of God, when God must be put first.

5th miracle: Wind and Wave Obey Jesus (8:23-27)

During the group's sojourn to the east side of the lake, to the region around the city of Gadara, a raging storm struck, threatening the lives of everyone on board. Jesus, tired from the pressing

crowds, had fallen asleep. Even after awakening to the screams and shouts of the men, however, He remained calm. What bothered Jesus was the spiritual immaturity of His followers. Granted, this was still fairly early in their ministry together, but after seeing what they had seen that day, were they not certain that here was a “man” who could control nature? “Oh, ye of little faith,”

At this point the disciples had already seen a number of miracles. They should have had faith and not worried when they saw the storm because Jesus was with them. And yet they still feared. Why? It is human nature. Fear and worry seems to be in our blood. Yet that is our old nature. We don’t have to live as slaves of that fear anymore. This worry and fear is the opposite of faith. Do not accept it as a normal part of human nature. Human nature is fallen and corrupted. There are many things that are natural for us to do that we should not do.

The miracle of calming the stormy seas should draw our attention because we, too, will face out-of-control situations that place us in grave peril. We need to know that Jesus has been there before, protecting and defending.



6th miracle: Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (8:28-34)

Gergesa was a village in the district of the Gadarenes, the people who lived there were probably Jews who worked with pigs in violation of the law of God.

If this were a movie, then the opening scene would be gripping! It is the middle of the night. Jesus and the disciples have just been through a terrible storm. The disciples are reeling from the realization that Jesus could just speak to a storm and make it stop. Then, they land the boat near a cemetery, and a naked demon-possessed man (covered in blood and wearing broken chains) runs out, yelling at Jesus.

He was an unclean man living in an unclean place [tombs] surrounded by unclean animals [pigs]. His reputation was so bad that even the Gentiles in the nearby town had cast him out. This man lived a pathetic life. Being possessed by demons had ruined his life. The demons that lived in the man

used the man's voice to address Jesus. He commanded the demons to transfer into the herd of nearby pigs. The pigs ran into the sea and drowned.

The ones who had been tending the pigs would have been very confused in the least. They rushed to tell everyone in town. The people from town had seen the demon-possessed man many times, but that had not frightened them like the sight of the man, fully clothed and obviously in his right mind.

The town's people had tried to keep this man away by chaining him up and hiding him away. It is easier to dismiss people or cast them out than it is to actually deal with them and live beside them. This and the fact that Jesus was interrupting their economic stability (pigs) made the people ask Jesus to leave.

Christ permits the demons to do that in the swine which He did not permit them to do in the possessed, to show us what rage they would exercise on people if left to their freedom and evil. Perhaps the loss of the swine was a punishment to those who kept them against the law.

Jesus knew that the healed man would be a living example to all the people. Although the man wanted to go with Jesus, Jesus told the man to go back to his family and tell them all about what the Lord had done for him.

There are a great many who prefer their swine before Savior and so they come short of Christ and His salvation. They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts and will not allow His word to have a place in them, because He and His word would destroy their lusts.



Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

From the 1st miracle {The leper}

These miracles that we saw in this lesson point ahead to the heavenly world that's to come. To the new creation. One day, Jesus will return, and He'll renew us, along with all the creation. Everything will be as it was intended - except even better, with Him at the center. So often, when we talk about miracles, we think of them as God suspending the natural order. But what if we thought of them more of God beginning to set things right? We are so used to a fallen world that sickness, disease, pain, and death seem natural.

When Jesus expels demons and heals the sick, He is driving out of Satan's power and restoring human beings who are hurt and sick. Jesus' healings are not supernatural miracles in a natural world. They are the only truly "natural" thing in a world that is unnatural, demonized and wounded.

What about your life - about this world - tempting you to lose heart? Can you see the glory in what Jesus does here - and what it means for your future? How have you lost hope, walking around in this fallen world? Has the unnatural become normal to you? Marvel as you see Jesus. See His crown. And be renewed in hope.

From the 6th miracle:

The whole city of Gergesene begged Jesus to depart from their region. They didn't praise God for His goodness when they saw the miracle. They didn't seek to understand more. They just wanted Jesus to leave. They wanted to continue living their comfortable lives with things they were familiar with (even if those familiar things were evil.) They refused to learn more about Jesus as this would require them to repent and abandon their pig trade.

This is very sad and completely different than the disciples who often questioned about things they couldn't understand.

In today's world, many people are like this as well. Perhaps they immediately reject the word of God because it is new to them and beyond their understanding. Most people would prefer to watch a movie than use their mind. Perhaps they even want to watch a show that they "don't need to use their mind" to understand. This generation is mentally lazy.

There are far more couch potatoes who go through life with dull expressions and ignore things they don't understand than there are sincere learners who try to understand the world and are willing to study, dig and question to find the answer.

We should be more like Mary, who was always meditating on the amazing things happening around her instead of the scribes whom Herod asked about the birth of Messiah. These scribes didn't even ask any questions or go to Bethlehem to investigate whether the Messiah was really being born there. Let us not miss a chance to change our old habits when God allows us the counsel.