KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 8:1-17

(Sermon from Sunday 30 July 2023, Richard van Lieshout)

Sermon Outline

- I did a long 'introduction' to the sermon in order to review the structure. I tried to make clear how Matthew's structure has theological emphases.
- Then I moved on to the three stories, starting with the centre story (the Centurion).

A. **Introduction**: Structure of Matthew (5 sets of Discourse + Narrative)
   - Indicating the Authority of Jesus in Word + Deed

B. **Background to Narrative 1**: Structure of Matthew 8-9 (3 sets of 3 miracle stories + 1 discipleship story)
   - Indicating miracles as means to the end, which is discipleship

C. **Overview of first three miracle stories**
   - The diversity of people included in the Kingdom
   - The inclusion of outcasts

1. **Miracle story 1**: The Centurion[1]
   - Emphasising Gentile inclusion
   - Call to faith in Jesus

2. **Miracle story 2**: Peter's Mother-in-law
   - Emphasising Jesus's compassion
   - The meaning of Isaiah 53 reference

3. **Miracle story 3**: The Leper
   - The Providence & Power of God

[1] This is the middle story, which is why I'm doing it first (a Matthew thing!). Then I moved to the third story (woman), then ended with the first (leper)

1. **<u>Information</u>**

    a) **Read the passage, perhaps twice using two different versions**

    b) **Fill in any info that didn't make it into the sermon.**

- There is a LOT of awesome exegetical information in these three miracle stories that did not make it into the sermon. Please go through the commentary notes on pages 6-8 and add in these extra details.

- In particular, I would encourage you to emphasise the following:
    - **The structure of chapters 8-9**, which interweave 3 miracle stories with a call to discipleship (page 5). This is important as it reminds us that miracles are a means to an end, and the end is *always* following Jesus! Miracles are thus not ends in themselves, for temporary relief so we can carry on with our own lives. They are meant to draw us into a discipleship relationship with Jesus. This truth sets us up for all the miracle stories to follow (9 of them in total!)
    - **The command to be silent** (v3-4, pg 6). This often perplexes people, but the reason is quite simple and linked to an important text, Isaiah 42:1-3, which is specifically tied to this idea in Matthew 12.
    - **The eschatological feast imagery in v10-12** (pg 7). I love this allusion to Isaiah 25:6-9!
    - **Understanding the reference to Isaiah 53 in v16-17** (pg 8), **and the subject of healing by faith**. This is crucial! Please get your minds around this!

2. **Activation**

- Below are some activation questions based on the sermon outline.

A. **Introduction**: Structure of Matthew (5 sets of Discourse + Narrative)

- **Why is it important to see both the words AND works of Jesus?** Matthew clearly wants us to see both together, as we can tell from the structure of his Gospel, but also in these repeated summaries of the ministry of Jesus[2]:
    - "*And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people*" (Matt 4:23)
    - "*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction*" (Matt 9:35)

    - There are two answer to this:
        - On a 'faith' level: Its helpful to see the compassion of Jesus (works) when taking the difficult steps of obeying his words.
        - On an 'action' level as disciples we will also be called to minister with both words and works (chapter 10). People tend towards either words (preaching with no living) OR works (acts of compassion but not gospel declaration), but we are called to both.

B. **Background to Narrative 1**: Structure of Matthew 8-9 (3 sets of 3 miracle stories + 1 discipleship story)

- **Why does Matthew of to great lengths to ensure each set of three miracle stories ends with a call to discipleship?**
    - This is to ensure that we know that miracles serve the purpose of motivating us to follow Jesus. They are means to an end (discipleship), they are not ends in themselves.

C. **Overview of first three miracle stories**

- **What does the range of diversity in the three people healed tell us?**
    - The diversity of people healed (woman/man, Jew/gentile, slave/free) tell us no-one is restricted access to the kingdom of God!
    - The fact that outcasts were included (primarily the leper, but also the Gentile and woman) again means anyone can get on this, with Jesus!

1. **Miracle story 1**: The Centurion

- **Discuss the relationship between God's purposes with Israel in the Old Testament, and the inclusion of Gentiles in the New Testament**.
    - Read Romans 9:25-27 to start. Notice also that the following story (Peter's mother-in-law) includes the healing of a Jew, which means the Gentiles are *included* in the story of the people of God, they don't *replace* the original people. We must pray for, and look forward to, a revival amongst Jews who will receive Jesus as Messiah.

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[2] Note that these *identical* summary statements both appear *before major discourse blocks*. The chapter 4

2. **Miracle story 2**: Peter's Mother-in-law

- **Why does the 'fulfillment' of Isaiah 53:4 (8:17) *not* mean that we will never experience sickness on earth again, or that we can be healed of any disease at any time**?
    - You may have discussed this in the 'Information' section, but if not please use the notes on page 8 for v16-17 to understand this.

- **Is it important that Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law without anyone asking?**

3. **Miracle story 3**: The Leper

- **In the sermon I mentioned that in this story we see the leper put the *power & providence of God side by side*. Often in our Christian lives, we rightly believe in the power of God, but presume upon the providence of God (ie assume his will exactly aligns with our wishes!). In effect, we believe we can get God to do anything we want Him to. How does the story of the leper transform us in this regard?**
    - Read the words of the leper again, slowly. He affirms the power of God ('you can make me clean'), but also trusts the providence of God ('If you will').

- **Share how we struggle with this, that is to trust both the power and providence of God**.
    - In the sermon I mentioned the three truth statements that we always need to hold together:
        i. God is Powerful
        ii. God is loving
        iii. Bad things happen

      The Christian faith always involves believing (i) and (ii) despite knowing (iii) is true too!

3. Implementation

- An effective implementation would be for the group to **memorise Matt 8:1-4 together**!
- This will ensure (especially keeping the lepers question in mind) we maintain the correct tension of power & providence in our lives (as well as help shape our prayers!)