

Title: Great and Good!
Text: Matthew 8. 14-17
Theme: How Jesus lived in our place.
Series: Matthew #47
Prop Stmt. Jesus lived in our place so that he could die in our place.

Read Text:

Our text this morning is four verses. When I began to look at this text in earnest, my initial thought was, seriously Bob, how much can you really say from four verses? Maybe I ought to rephrase that. Seriously Bob, how much should you really say from four verses? But then when you take the time to really look at this text, you realize that this is such an incredible text that we could spend much more time. Here's an example of what I mean.

I've explained to you the theme and the flow of Matthew's gospel. Chapters 8-9 are a collection of events that Matthew arranges in between two major teaching passages. Matthew intentionally picks these events because he is writing with a specific purpose in mind. When we look at the arrangement of these events, then the purpose seemingly leaps off the page and grabs us by the heart! For example, in these two chapters, Matthew records 3 sets of 3 miracle events of Christ. The first set of 3 miracles is followed by a call of Jesus to follow him. The second set of 3 miracles are followed by a call of Jesus to follow him and the third set of 3 miracles are followed by a call of Jesus to follow him, by going.

Now, do you see the point? These miracle accounts are here in order to do a couple of things: 1) they are making the authority of Christ very clear. When he says "follow me" he has the authority and right to command people (us) to do that. 2) These accounts tell us what kind of a leader we have. Who is this man who is commanding people to follow him? Is he safe? Is this good?

These four verses capture two major aspects of the character of Christ that are beautifully combined in him and therefore provide a compelling picture of why we should and why we must follow him. Those two aspects are, the authority of Christ and the compassion of Christ.

I am preaching these four verses in view of the text that is following. So, here is the big idea of this sermon. Jesus commands us to follow him. Why wouldn't you? You are following somebody. Why would you not follow Christ and why would you not plead with others to follow Christ?

I. **Where else do you find this kind of authority?** (14-17)

Look at v.15. Matthew is making it very clear that the power of Christ to heal was irrefutable. Let's look at the setting. This account is in Mark's gospel and Luke's gospel as well. Jesus had been to church that morning. Actually, Jesus had been to the

synagogue in Capernaum that morning and delivered the message. While he was teaching, a man who was demon-possessed began to disrupt the gathering. He was crying out and Jesus rebuked the demon and commanded him to leave the man. The man was convulsed by the demon, but the demon departed. This obviously got the attention of the people and they were talking about it. This man not only could teach, but he had authority! When I read Mark's account, I get the sense that James and John were with Jesus, but Peter (Simon) and Andrew were at their home, probably because Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever. Luke (the doctor) notes that it was a high fever.

A. Jesus has authority over sickness.

Jesus left the synagogue after a rather intense gathering that morning and went to the home of Peter and Andrew, where they informed him about Peter's mother-in-law. By the way, there are several examples of Jesus and his disciples being in homes. And, there are several examples of Jesus doing some significant teaching and performing some miracles in these homes as well, which would begin to break down the idea that all important things have to take place at the Temple or Synagogue. Jesus is making it evident that he is the one who is significant, not where happens to be. It is also interesting to note that archaeologists may have found this very home. (explain – Davies/Allison, p.33) Jesus responded by touching her, and (according to Luke's account) rebuking the disease. The disease left her.

A doctor did a study and found that most medicines have an average of 70 side effects. For example: CHANTIX is a non-nicotine prescription medicine specifically developed to help adults 18 and over quit smoking. Here is a list of the possible side effects. There are only 32 of them.

1. Gas
2. Suicidal actions
3. Vomiting
4. Constipation
5. Sleep problems
6. Nausea
7. Blisters in your mouth
8. Rash
9. Trouble breathing
10. Swelling of the throat
11. Swelling of the mouth
12. Swelling of the face
13. Life-threatening allergic reactions
14. Peeling of skin
15. Redness
16. Rash
17. Worsening mental health problems
18. Confusion
19. Paranoia

20. Changes in thinking
21. Changes in behavior
22. Depression
23. Anger
24. Agitation
25. Panic
26. Anxiety
27. Hallucinations
28. Abnormal sensations
29. Suicidal thoughts
30. Mania
31. Aggression
32. Hostility

In fact, she was healed so completely that she was now free to do what she wanted to do. She served Christ, and from Mark's account we find that she served the other disciples as well. The wording suggests she helped serve a meal to them at a table. I think that it is possible that Matthew zooms in, so to speak, on her serving of Christ as a way of saying that from this point on, she began serving Christ. This was the moment that she believed that he really was the Messiah.

B. Jesus has authority of demons.

The way that Matthew lays this out, we see this emphasis upon the word of Christ. Christ taught with authority in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ spoke the word and the Centurion's servant was healed. Now, "with a word" he cast out the spirits, also called demons.

Demons are real. They are angels who rebelled against God and live under the tyrannical and temporary reign of Satan. One of the purposes of the angels who are faithful to God is to serve his children (Heb. 1.14). Therefore one of the purposes of evil angels is to seek to destroy and impede the children of God. Demons are distinct persons. They do not have a body, but are able to inhabit material things, such as people or animals. Demons do not appear to be able to take control of a person without some sort of permission or invitation.

What are our greatest fears in dealing with demons? 1) We cannot see them. 2) They know things about us and can expose us. 3) We cannot control them. 4) We know they are evil, powerful and appear able to harm us and the people we love. Imagine that you had a boyfriend who beat you and threatened to kill you if you ever told anyone about his abuse. But, one day, you called the police anyway and he was locked up. But, as he was being led away he looked at you and said, "I will get you." And now, you just heard that he was getting out and someone said that somehow he was able to get a key to your house and he knew where you worked. That is what the terror is like in dealing with demons. They know the power of a threat. They know the power of an accusation. We should also note that the people who are depicted as being under the influence of these demons are

pathetic. We actually have a name for them: demoniacs. They are often depicted as being violent, alone, out of control and threatening. The demoniacs are avoided, often outcast and feared. But these menacing, terrifying, and diabolical terrors are wimps in the presence of Jesus.

This is a pivotal issue in Matthew 12 where Jesus is accused of being in allegiance with the demons, since that is the only explanation that the self-righteous Pharisees can come up with to explain his authority over them. But, even that argument does not make any sense as Jesus points out. But for now, we see an authority of both power and purity. Jesus not only occupies a position of authority over these demons, but he is Lord over Satan as well. As the Son of God, there is nothing evil about him. There are no secret sins. There are no skeletons in the closet that the demons can threaten him with to expose. The only threat they seem to have is the threat to tell people who he is. And even then Jesus (according to Mark) would not permit them to speak.

The same word that speaks with authority has authority over sickness and has authority over demons as well. In some cases, the sickness was brought about by the demon, but Matthew makes it clear that this was generally not the case. But, this unequaled authority is not the only thing that is so captivating about Christ.

II. **Where else do you find this kind of compassion?**

The authority of Christ was exercised in a very personal manner. Here is Jesus going into the home of two of his disciples. Jesus went into all sorts of places and put himself into the midst of many needy situations. This is no different.

A. **Jesus cares for those close to us.**

I do not know if Peter's decision to follow Christ created some tension with his wife and her family or not. The guy left his job as a fisherman to follow a man that is rumored to be the Messiah. That may not have gone over well with his in-laws. That is all speculation on my part. But, this is clear. Peter is concerned about his mother-in-law and so is Jesus. This is very important to note because this helps us understand the conversation that follows this. Is Jesus saying to this man (21-22), "I don't care about your dad?" NO! I will address that next week. But this text is clear that Jesus cares about those who are close to us. But again, do not forget why Matthew records this. He wants you to know that you can trust Him. You can follow Him. You must follow Him.

B. **Jesus cares for those that others do not.**

This is the 3rd miracle that Jesus performs in chapter 8. What is Matthew showing us? He heals a leper, a servant associated with a Gentile and a woman. Over and over Christ spends time with the people that society tended to overlook because they did not have status and power. The one with authority used it for those who needed it.

C. **Jesus cares and keeps on caring.**

Obviously Matthew did not record everything that happened to Jesus. But what he does record gives you a very clear sense of what it was like to be with him. Jesus was a magnet for people with serious problems. He comes down from the mountain and is confronted by a leper. He barely gets into Capernaum and he is interrupted because a servant is going to die unless Jesus does something. From Mark's account we find out that he goes into the synagogue where a demon-possessed man interrupts him by screaming. He goes into Peter's home and is expected to heal Peter's mother-in-law. And instead of being able to enjoy a meal and be refreshed, the whole neighborhood of needy people show up at the door. It never ends! Everywhere he turns there are broken people who are suffering. Not only that, but this is the Sabbath. This is the "day-off" isn't it? Sometimes people need your help, even when you thought that you might get a little rest. We do not always handle that too well, do we. Aren't you grateful our Savior does?

I've told you before that Cathi and I have a daughter who is a nurse at St. Jude's Children's Research Center in Memphis, TN. The children who go there are often there because there is nowhere else for them to turn. She told me about one child who was dying and yet there was a promising new drug that looked like it would help him. It had been developed by a drug company and had been in the experimental stage. However, the company was now applying for FDA approval and took it out of the experimental stage which meant that what had been previously available for patients was no longer available until approved. In order to get the drug approved so that it could be available to many, the company couldn't keep giving it away on an experimental basis. But, by that time, this child would die. So, his mom went on a mission. I can tell you this story because her mission became very public. She pleaded with this company and when she was told "no" she refused to back down. She would not stop until they said "yes." And they did. But, here is my point. Desperate people and needy people are often very demanding because they are facing their biggest fears. As you know, it takes a lot to keep caring and to treat each person as a person and not as a problem. The sun was setting (Luke's account) and yet, there is a crowd. Most likely they are not in an orderly line, but crying out, pushing forward, and all demanding to be seen. They are. No one is left waiting behind the ropes while the rock-star faith healer is whisked away by his bodyguards and fleet of cars and SUVs. No, Jesus stays until they are all healed. And tomorrow, it will start all over again.

D. Jesus cares deeper than we care. (17)

People brought the diseased and demon-possessed to Jesus. Not only are they received by him and healed by him but, as Matthew says in his reference to Isaiah 53, Jesus "took our illnesses and bore our diseases." Jesus healed people because he took upon himself their conditions. That is the point of the text that Matthew quotes from in Isaiah. The Suffering Servant would bear the griefs and the sorrows of his people. Matthew recognizes that the ultimate source of illnesses and diseases is from a world that was cursed by sin. He would be so closely identified with the people that he came to save that he would be accused of being stricken, as it were, with leprosy and associated with the demoniacs. When you think of this aspect of Jesus, do not think of a physician who simply lectures on medical procedures from a podium in a hotel ballroom. Jesus is more like a medic on the front line of the battle. His face is splattered with dirt and blood; his clothes are torn and stained. His hair is a mess. He looks almost as weary and broken as his patients did.

V.17 takes us deeper. It takes us deeper than most of us even think about. When we are sick or when people that we love are sick, we just want to see them get better and we usually do not care about anything else and sometimes we do not care about anyone else. Take, for example, the mom who went on a mission to get the drug in order to save her son. What if, in giving her son the drug, it delayed the approval process by a week, which meant that other people could not get it? But, in the moment, we are desperate for a cure. But look at this text. Jesus is not only providing an immediate cure for these people, he is doing something better. He knows that sickness is caused either directly or indirectly by sin. There are some cases where sickness is the direct result of one's sin. We do not always know when that is the case, but we do know that sickness in general is evidence of the fact that we live in a fallen world. That is, we live in the world after the fall of man into sin. When we get sick, we want to get better. But Matthew is saying that Jesus is not only healing people in the moment, but what he is doing is directly connected to his mission of dealing with the actual root of the issue. Matthew already made it clear (1.21) that Jesus came into this world in order to save us from our sin. He will do this through his sacrificial death and resurrection. But, what made his sacrificial death so effective is that he not only offered up his own life as a perfect sacrifice in our place, but when he offered up his perfect life in death, he had taken upon himself all our sin. As Isaiah 53 predicted, the LORD laid on him (Christ) the iniquity of us all. He took our griefs and our sorrows. In other words, when Christ took on our sin, he took upon himself the consequences of our sins as well. That is what Matthew is focusing on. When Christ healed, he was providing an exchange. He was granting health, because he was accepting the sickness upon himself. He was bearing it. But how could he bear the sickness upon himself when sickness is either directly or indirectly the result of sin? The only way that Jesus had the authority to heal was because he

I believe that when Matthew references Isaiah that he is pointing out that Jesus is not merely exercising power over sickness, but that he is personally engaged in and connected to the disease itself. He is not a professional healer; he is a personal one. His healings were not public events made for show so that he could collect a large offering, sell DVD's, anointing oil, or record and edit for his TV show. When you watch the fraudulent faith healers on TV, many of whom have been exposed over and over, you see the results of a production in motion. People who are afflicted with congenital defects and clear abnormalities are not permitted to get near the stage. Only people who pass the screeners' interviews are the ones selected for the show. But the real rock-star is the faith healer. But, you can't get close to him. His bodyguards, limousines, private jets and 5-star hotels keep all except his close confidants away. The contrast between them and the Jesus they claim to represent is extreme.

This is how Isaiah 53.4 is fulfilled. He does this and we respond with rejection. He cares so much that he bore our illness, our diseases, our griefs and our sorrows, and we looked at him and thought that he was defective, polluted, defiled, broken. He was! But, what made him appear to be so defective, polluted, defiled and broken? It was because it was our sin and the affects of our sin that was on him. We were repulsed by him. But in reality we were repulsed by our sin that he bore.

III. Where else do find this combination of authority and compassion?

Point 3 is very short, but very important. The only way that Jesus was able to exercise the authority to heal was because he had the compassion to take our sin upon himself. In other words, "God is great and God is good" and while it is right to thank Him for our

food, this perfect harmony of greatness and goodness, of authority and compassion is why He alone is the only one worthy of our faith.

So, where else will you find this authority? Where else will you find this compassion? Where else will find this perfect combination? That is a Savior that you can trust. That is a Savior that you should trust. That is a Savior that you must trust. These events are recorded in order to call you to follow Him.

Who or what is better?