

Matthew 8:18-9:38 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

We ended in the middle of ch. 8 last Wednesday so will pick it up at v. 18 tonight.

This is still the first year of Jesus' public ministry and He has centered it in the northern region of Galilee where there were some 3 million people living.

Matthew tells us that he went through all the villages & cities of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and healing all manner of illness.

2. Count the cost • 8:18-22

18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.

Jesus' teaching had been *enlightening*, but it was the miracles and healings that were *exciting* & drew the biggest crowds.

They were no longer so much interested in what He had to *say* – but in what He could *do*.

But Jesus knew it was the message that was most important.

A physical healing might delay pain and suffering for another few years of their earthly lives – but His message would bring an eternal healing to their souls!

As wonderful as the miracles were, He had come main to teach & preach, so when the multitude grew too vast to allow effective ministry, He told the disciples they must travel to the other side of the lake.

But before they embarked on the trip a scribe came, saying he wanted to join the little band of disciples.

19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” 20 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

Every rabbi had his group of students; “disciples” they were called, who followed the teacher where ever he went.

The more *popular* a rabbi was, the more financial gifts he would be given by those he taught, and the little band of disciples could over time secure a nice little purse.

This scribe saw in Jesus an effective means of putting a comfortable savings together.

But Jesus let him know – He wasn't in it for the money and there would be no profit-making in His retinue.

Wouldn't it be nice if some of the modern day religious profit-seekers would take this to heart?

Jesus had no where to lay His head, but they build 15,000 square foot homes on a bluff overlooking the ocean on prime real estate in Hawaii.

They buy horse ranches and country clubs and air-conditioned dog houses for their pet.

Years ago, I heard one of the prosperity teachers comment on verse 20 and say that what Jesus *meant* was that He had no home on *that side* of the lake, and that's why He had said they were going to the other side, because His *mansion* was over there and what He was doing was inviting this scribe to *come with Him to His mansion* on the other side of the lake.

Talk about butchering the text!!!

But what most amazed me was that the audience he was speaking to were whopping it up and shouting “Amen!”

Nothing in the text, nothing would allow for such an interpretation – in fact, the text flatly contradicts such an understanding of what Jesus is saying here.

21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” 22 But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Here comes one of those who had already *voluntarily attached himself* to Jesus. This was not one of the 12, for they hadn't been called yet.

This was just someone who had been following Jesus around in His early days of ministry there

in Galilee.

Now, as Jesus prepares to leave the region and traverse the lake, this guy says that he needs to go home and bury his old man.

This doesn't mean that the man had died – this would-be disciple meant that his dad was still alive but in his *senior* years.

He was asking for permission to go home and live with his dad *until* he died; then he would come and renew his discipleship with Jesus.

But Jesus issues an *exclusive ultimatum* – following Him must supersede all other priorities & relationships.

Which is more important, your relationship with God or with your parents?

“ “ Children?

“ “ Husband/Wife?

In actuality – the strength & success of all our relationships is built on the vitality & strength of our relationship with Jesus.

If we are following Him first & well – then all other relationships will be great!

3. Jesus' authority • 8:23-9:8

Now, Matthew shows Jesus' authority and power *over nature* . . .

a. 8:23-27 • over nature

23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him.

There's a sermon right there – “His disciples *followed* Him.”

That's what disciples *do* – they follow Jesus!

If you're a disciple, you will follow Jesus; if you're not following Him, you're not a disciple.

It's become the common practice in most evangelical churches today to invite people to come to Christ through an altar call of some kind. [elab]

But none of these *forms* of receiving Christ save someone – they're just ways, methods, for a person to formalize their initial commitment to Christ.

The crucial issue isn't if you raise your hand, or go forward, or say a prayer – it's do you go one from their to *follow Christ?*

Having a follow-up ministry with new believers is a really good idea.

Some churches enroll new converts in membership or discipleship classes.

We provide *Foundations* classes here 3 or 4 times a year.

And we encourage the prayer counselors who pray with someone to receive Christ after the services to follow up on them that next few weeks to make sure they are being encouraged in their new life in Christ.

But the fact of the matter is – when there's been a genuine work of the Spirit in a person's heart, they are going to have the inner motivation and desire to grow in the Lord.

The Bottom line is this – disciples follow their teachers – and Christians will follow Jesus; they will seek Him, obey Him.; hang with Him!

24 And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. ²⁵ Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” ²⁶ But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ So the men marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

I love this story because of the contrast of powers it reveals to us.

Matthew tells us this story at this point because he wants his readers to catch the greatness of Jesus' authority and power.

As they're crossing the Lake of Galilee, a terrifying storm rises up and threatens the craft they're in.

And while the disciples fear for their lives, Jesus is sound asleep.

So they wake him & ask Him to do something lest they drown.

Now, remember, some of these were seasoned fishermen who'd grown up on that lake; they'd seen storms before.

But this was a tempest unlike any other & they knew their lives were threatened.

When Jesus awoke, He asked why they were so fearful and gently rebuked them for their lack of faith.

Do you catch that? He'd just *commended* the faith of a leper and Gentile earlier in the chapter, and now He's *rebuking* the lack of faith of His own Jewish disciples!!!!

He could rebuke them because of the fact that in v. 18 it was His command that they get in the boat and *go to the other side of the lake*.

If He said they were going to the other side, they were going to get there – they needn't fear!

If we're obeying the Lord, then no matter what befalls us, we needn't fear, because we've placed ourselves in His keeping & care.

But what I love about this story is how they were *fearful* of the storm, but then once they witnessed Jesus' power over nature to calm the storm, they were *amazed with exceedingly great wonder*.

When the other gospels tell this story, they say the disciples were *afraid* of the storm but *terrified* of Jesus!

b. 8:28-34 • over spiritual realm

28 When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. 29 And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

This region lay on the eastern shore of the lake and was a dry, hilly, wilderness area; contrary to that prosperity teacher I mentioned earlier, there were no 15,000 sq. ft. mansions there.

These two demon-possessed men had terrorized the region so that no one passed through there.

When Jesus' boat pulled up, they came running out and challenged Him.

Shock waves had gone through the spiritual realm from Jesus' ministry in Capernaum and the rest of Galilee and these demons had received report about Him.

They immediately recognized Him for who He was, the Son of God, and asked if He'd come to bring the judgment of the last day on them.

30 Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. 31 So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." 32 And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

This is interesting. The demons knew that Jesus was there to affect the deliverance and healing of these two men – but they didn't want to be *unclothed*.

They would rather possess animals than be without a body.

This may give us a hint as to what the judgment of fallen angels entails.

It seems they lost the glory that clothed them as the *holy angels* & in their desire to reacquire that glory, the best they can do is to infest a *physical* being.

In any case, once again, Jesus just says one word, and the entire pack of demons which had terrorized this whole region, flew out of the two men and into a whole herd of swine; there were *many* of them it says.

But the swine were made mad by the possession and drowned themselves.

This is the first occurrence in history of *deviled ham*.

33 Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.

Now wait – what?

These two men, who had terrorized this entire region for a long time, are seen by the people of that region to have been made normal and sane, no longer a dangerous threat, and they have the testimony of the swine-herders who told them about the herd rushing into the sea, and all

they can think of is to ask Jesus to --- *LEAVE*?

Yes! And you know *why* they asked Jesus to leave?

Because swine-herding was their *livelihood* and they couldn't have some guy around who was sending all their profits into the drink! That doesn't work at all.

Better to let a few people suffer with the debilitating effects of demon-possession than that their wallets would grow thin.

Pigs were unclean animals and forbidden to the Jewish diet, but the Gentiles liked pork.

So these Jewish renegades who lived in the region kept pigs and sold them to the Gentile markets.

When their Messiah came to them, they were so compromised, so invested in the world, they no longer had an interest in the Messiah or the Kingdom life He brought them, and *demonstrated* to them in His deliverance of the two men.

No, they were more interested & invested in their own kingdom - a realm of profits & pigs.

This speaks to us about the need to consider our career in the light of the Kingdom of God.

Is our occupation *compatible* with the aims and values of the Christian Faith.

Is Jesus Lord over my work – or am I a swine-herder, making profit off that which is inherently sinful and carnal?

In the early days of Billy Graham's ministry in LA, a well known gangster attended one of the meetings and professed faith in Christ.

He became involved in a small group and began to grow, it seemed, in the things of the faith.

But then the leader of the discipleship group discovered that this gangster was still carrying on with his criminal activity.

He confronted the mobster, and told him he needed to repent and end his crime and sin or stop coming to the group.

The gangster grew indignant.

He said, "Wait a minute; for weeks I've been coming to this group and met Christian *businessmen*, Christian *mechanics*, Christian *postal workers*; there's a Christian *artist*, a Christian *dancer*, and a Christian *barber*. Are you telling me there's no room for a Christian *gangster*?"

John Newton was a hard drinking and hard living slaver, the captain of a sailing ship which trafficked in slaves.

He became a Christian, and realized that slaving was no proper occupation for one who has been set free from bondage to sin and death.

The hymn he wrote, *Amazing Grace*, was drawn from the life of a man who knew just how deep and desperate his spiritual condition had been before the Lord saved him.

This story in Matthew 8 reminds us that no matter how dramatic the demonstration of Jesus' power, there will always be those who would chose the temporal things of this life & the passing profits & pleasures of this world over the eternal profits & pleasures of the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 9

c. 9:1-8 • over sin

¹So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.

Capernaum. This wasn't Jesus' home town, but it was the city He'd made the base of operations in Galilee.

²Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

The other gospels fill in the details - this is the time where there were so many people crowding the house where Jesus was that there was no way for the 4 friends who were carrying this paralytic to get him into Jesus immediate presence.

So what did they do – they climbed up onto the flat roof, and dug into it, making a hole wide enough for them to lower the pallet their friend was lying on.

As Matthew says here – when Jesus saw their faith – when He witnessed just how insistent and

persistent these guys were in getting their needy friend into His presence, he said to the man – “Son, cheer up – Your sins are forgiven!”

Now, think about it – if you were one of those sitting there, or one of the 4 friends who were looking expectantly through the hole in the roof. Would that seem like the right thing to say? Remember – they believed that sickness, illness, conditions like paralysis were the judgment of God. So in their minds, the means to healing began with the forgiveness of sins.

But, Jesus KNOWS that this is bad theology on their part and He wants to correct them, showing them that sickness is not the direct result of some sin.

Can sin lead to illness? Certainly – but that is more a natural kind of cause and effect thing that a direct judgment of God.

So, Jesus wants to correct their faulty view of the origin of illness.

He forgives the man’s sins – does the man then get up, healed? NO! He continues to lie there.

But Jesus statement has really tweaked the minds of the religious experts who were there . . .

³ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves,

Note that – they said it within themselves; they didn’t say anything out loud, this was just a thought within their own minds.

“This Man blasphemes!”

They knew that Jesus’ forgiving the man his sins was making the claim that He was God, for only God can forgive sins. In their minds, this was the very highest form of blasphemy!!

⁴ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said,

Even without their having said a word, Jesus knew what words were being said in their hearts, and turned from looking at the paralytic to looking directly at them and then said

“Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵ For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? ⁶ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” ⁷ And he arose and departed to his house.

Can you picture yourself in the place of one of those scribes?

You’ve just had the rug pulled out from under you in two very important ways:

- 1) Your whole belief about sickness has been upended.
- 2) And you’re in the presence of a man who’s just made the claim to be God, and then He proved it by healing the paralytic!!!

These guys would be speechless and reeling!

You see, Jesus severed the connection between sin and sickness in that when he said the man’s sins were forgiven, the man didn’t rise then. He only rose when Jesus then spoke the word of healing. Jesus used this man’s affliction, to demonstrate to the scribes, the religious experts, that He was in fact, more than just one of the many traveling rabbis, or even a wonder-worker. He was God!

⁸ Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

This miracle was a standout because this paralytic was someone everyone in Capernaum knew. His situation was desperate.

But when they saw him walking about normally, they realized something dramatic had happened.

This miracle rivaled the great miracles of their nation’s past when Moses and the prophets lived.

4. The call of Matthew • 9:9-13

⁹ As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him.

In his humility, Matthew summarizes his call by Jesus into a brief and not very complimentary passage.

Matthew fell into a category of Jews known as the *publicani*, from which we get the word “publicans.”

These were people who for moral reasons had fallen into a place of total contempt in Jewish

society.

Tax-collectors were the largest group of those called ‘publicans’ and they were despised because they were Jews who were collecting taxes for the hated Romans, who the people considered to be ungodly and unholy illegal usurpers and oppressors.

The noted Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim reports that a Jewish *publicani* was barred from the synagogue and was forbidden to have any religious or social contact with his fellow Jews. He was ranked with the unclean animals, which a devout Jew would not so much as touch. He was in the class of swine, and because he was held to be a traitor and a congenital liar, he was ranked with robbers and murderers and was forbidden to give testimony in any Jewish court. ^[1]

There were two categories of publicans; the *gabbai*, and the *mokhes*.

The *gabbai* collected the basic taxes on land, income, and property.

The *mokhes* were authorized by the Romans to collect a tax on any and everything they deemed taxable.

There are records of *mokhes* collecting import duties, tollway fees, boat docking fees, business license fees, and so on.

They had almost unlimited latitude in their taxing powers and could attach a tax to virtually any article or activity.

For instance, they levied taxes on a person’s boat, on the fish he caught with it, and on the dock where he unloaded it.

They could tax a traveler’s donkey, his slaves and servants, and his goods.

They even had authority to open private letters to see if a taxable business of some sort might be related to the letter.

So, the *mokhes* were incredibly nosey and ended up becoming the very most hated and despised of all the publicans!

Guess what kind of tax-collector Matthew was – he was a *mokhes*, sitting in his little toll-booth, shuffling out to accost everyone who passed by and assessing some tax on them.

But one day, Jesus walked by, and issued a simple invitation.

Matthew was used to people trying to sneak by, or diverting their gaze so as not to draw attention to themselves.

Jesus approached Matthew with a the direction and manner of someone who fully understood His authority – and He gave a simple command, “Follow Me.”

Matthew turned his back on his lucrative but despised career and from that day forward, followed Jesus.

It seems that Matthew persuaded Jesus to visit his home, for in the next verses we read . . .

10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

Remember, the publicans were barred from polite and normal Jewish social life, so they banned together in their own little society, and now Jesus is hanging out with them.

But wait, just before this, Jesus had claimed to be God when He forgave the paralytic.

How can a holy God be hanging out with the dregs of human society?

That’s what the Pharisees want to know and bring the query to Jesus’ disciples.

Jesus overheard them . . .

12 When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ But go and learn what *this* means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

The publicans knew they were sinners; they made no pretense whatsoever of being good people.

This does not mean that they didn’t wish to change their condition, just that they had no hope of every having any place in Jewish society than the one they had sunk to.

Once you were a publican, you would always ever and anon by a publican in the eyes of everyone else.

But that didn't mean the publicans didn't long for something different.

They knew they were sinners and had come to believe that they would rot in the grave and never know the joys of heaven.

Jesus came to speak the word of hope and promise to the one's who would listen and receive.

The only one's who will accept a Savior are those who first, know they are lost, and then second, long for salvation.

By spending time with them and showing them the kindness and mercy of God, Jesus was birthing hope in the hearts of the publicans.

When Jesus said to the Pharisees, "**go and learn**" He was using one of their favorite put downs on them!

It was commonly used in rabbinic writings to rebuke those who did not know what they should have known.

He then quotes the prophet Hosea 6:6 in which God rebukes the religious people of that day for being more concerned with the stiff formal regulations of the law than for the people the law was meant to protect and bless.

The Pharisees couldn't have missed the link Jesus was drawing between those of Hosea's day and themselves.

Then Jesus caps it all by saying – "Listen, who needs to repent? Who does God want to repent?"

Sinners! The righteous don't need to repent. So, *you Pharisees* if you are righteous, then you don't need to repent. But these publicans, to you they are the very worst of all sinners, so ought they repent? Well, that's what I was sent to do, bring them to repentance. So with them is where I need to be."

Jesus was not saying the Pharisees were truly righteous, they only thought of themselves that way – whereas the publicans made not claim at righteousness, they freely acknowledged they were sinners.

Jesus really turns the Pharisees on their ear with His reply.

The righteous ought to want what God wants – and God wants sinners to repent.

The Pharisees knew that God sent the prophets to those in sin with the message of repentance.

So, if the Pharisees were truly righteous, that is doing what God wanted, and that was the repentance of sinners – isn't hanging with the sinners instead of utterly shunning them what they ought to have been doing?

So, how could Jesus spend time with the publicans and not lose His distinctive holiness or sense of mission, be accepted by them, and the Pharisees avoided the publicans like the plague?

Simple – Jesus time spent with the publicans and sinners was aimed at repentance; He never lost sight of who He was and what He was there to do – show the joy of the holy life and the open door to it for those who will come.

The Pharisees wouldn't have anything to do with the publicans, probably because they were fearful of being tarnished and stained with their sin.

Let me explain it this way – I can go to a meeting of kleptomaniacs and share the love and forgiveness of God with them, hanging out with them for hours while they share their common experiences, and I will not have any problem being tempted to want to go out and steal some stuff.

But I am not going to go witness backstage at the Victoria Secret Fashion Show, if you catch my drift.

I am simply not the strong.

Does that mean those models, designers and all the support staff are any less needy of Jesus?

No, it just means there's a little bit of the Pharisee in me and not as much of Jesus as I wish there were.

Now, lest you think this is a not very good example – remember that another group that composed the publicans, besides tax-collectors, were harlots, and several of these approached Jesus.

At one point, one of them let down her hair and wiped it on Jesus feet – this was an act of

incredibly scandalous intimacy for that culture, but Jesus let it go, and even commended her for it.

I don't know how you are, but I'm eternally thankful Jesus spent time with sinners and not just with the holy & religious folk.

5. A new thing • 9:14-17

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. 17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

The followers of John the Baptist were a bit confused because their teacher & leader shared a message of repentance that called for spiritual mourning and sorrow for sin.

When Jesus came in fulfillment of John's ministry, He shared the other half of the message of repentance, that following sorrow for sin comes the joy of having that sin forgiven.

John foretold – Jesus fulfilled!

So these two men came from two different epochs of redemptive history.

John was the last of the first epoch, and Jesus was the initiator of the new era.

Because salvation was embodied in Jesus, how could His followers weep and mourn while He was with them.

Yes, He would be taken away from them, and then they would indeed mourn and fast, but not now.

To everything there is a season – and this was not the season of fasting but of feasting.

6. Raising the dead • 9:18-26

18 While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live." 19 So Jesus arose and followed him, and so *did* His disciples. 20 And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. 21 For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well." 22 But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour.

The other gospels tell us this ruler's name was Jairus and that he was the leader of the local synagogue.

Since the synagogue was the center of Jewish social life and acted as not only the worship but the community center, the ruler of the synagogue was really the mayor of the city was well.

This man has come to accept Jesus as nothing less than God, for he worshipped Him and requested that Jesus raise her from the dead.

As Jesus was making his way to the Jairus' house, a woman came up behind Him and touched the hem of his robe.

This woman had a medical condition that led to a perpetual menstrual cycle.

This would have been a serious debilitating illness that would have left her weak.

But to her, even worse than the physical affliction was the social cost, for women were considered unclean during their period and so she would not have been able to have any kind of a normal social life.

During their period, Jewish women had to isolate themselves.

This meant contact with her family, her husband and children was limited and she would be banned from the synagogue

She'd suffered with this illness for 12 years, and the other gospels tell us she'd spent all her

money on physicians, trying to find relief. But they'd just taken her money and left her without any help.
She'd heard of Jesus and the many miracles of healing he'd performed and she knew He could help her.

But, there's a problem – because she's unclean, she can't approach Him, let alone touch Him. Still she is desperate, and think the only way to go about it is to secretly sneak into the crowd around Him and try to covertly touch that part of Him which He won't notice – the hem of His robe.

Some commentators want to fault the woman for her seemingly superstitious beliefs that there was healing virtue on His clothes, but I don't think that's it at all; she knows that because she's unclean, she cannot request help from Him, He can't touch her or really have any contact or communication with her.

So she sneaks up, makes contact, and sure enough – she's healed!

Then Jesus whirls around and finalizes the healing with a personal word from His lips.

You see, it was crucial He do this so that both the woman, all her relatives, and everyone who reads this story would not begin to get superstitious ideas about the healing and power of Christ.

The virtue was not in the tassels that hung from the hem of Jesus' robe!
It was her faith *in Him*, not his clothing, that resulted in her healing!

Then Jesus resumed His journey to Jairus' house.

23 When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, 24 He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him.

What we read here may be a little confusing. If the man's daughter had died, why are their flute players and a noisy crowd there? This sounds more like a party than a scene of sorrow.

In that culture, moment such as this, were times to show intense emotion.

Typically there were three times when strong emotions were expressed publicly; at the birth of a son, at a wedding, and at a death.

In fact, there were professional mourners you could rent who would come to your house or the grave site when burying the loved one, who would weep for pay.

Weepers got paid by the volume of their tears – so here' a little tear jar they would use.

Flute players didn't play melodic niceties, they played mournful dirges and would even blow on the flute in a way to produce a sound of a shriek, a wail of sadness.

The richer and more influential you were, the more mourners you could afford.

Mourning at death was so important to this culture that Herod the Great, knowing no one would mourn his passing, rather, they would probably rejoice, cooked up a plan to make sure there would be mourning in Jerusalem when he died.

As he neared his last days, he ordered his guards to arrest a hundred of Jerusalem's most beloved leaders, sages, and benefactors.

Then he gave the command that the hour he expired, the guards were to slay all hundred of them – this way there would be mourning in Jerusalem at his demise!

When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house, he found a large number of professional mourners there, plying their trade.

But He told them all to be quiet & split – for the girl was only sleeping.

Now, it was certain, she was dead! The doctor had been there; they had seen her pale corpse.

They knew she was gone, and they had a job to do, a paycheck coming.

If the girl wasn't dead – then all their weeping and playing was for nothing and this had been a waste of their time.

So they began to mock and laugh at Him.

The word Matthew uses here – 'ridicule' refers to a derisive kind of heated anger that comes out in bitter sarcasm.

In other words, the faked but intense show of emotion they were giving toward the loss of

Jairus is now turned into something *real* in their display of total scorn at Jesus!
This switch from feigned sorrow to mocking laughter proves how insincere they were in their show of sadness, and so proved they weren't really worthy of the pay they hoped for. If they had been genuinely sad over the girl's death, they would have brightened and been delighted at the news she was only sleeping!
Notice that Jesus doesn't argue with them. He simply proceeds with His mission of calling the dead one back to life.

25 But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. 26 And the report of this went out into all that land.

Notice how effortlessly Jesus raised her.

Now, there are so many wonderful things here to consider.

First, since she was dead, for Jesus to take her by the hand was considered *taboo*.

It was forbidden for Jews to touch a dead body lest they become ritually unclean and so barred from the synagogue and worship until they had gone through the proper cleansing ritual.

So, did touching her defile Him? No! Because His touch restored her life.

Jesus is Holy and cannot be anything other than holy.

No amount of contact with what is unholy or unclean can defile Him because whatever He touches *becomes* Holy and Clean.

Whether it's a 12 year old dead girl *He reaches out to touch*, or the woman who's had a 12 year long period *who reaches out to touch Him* – contact with Jesus brings change; it changes us from unholy to holy, from impure to pure, from defiled to clean.

The girl was dead, and so she did nothing to engage Jesus; He came to her while she was really out of the picture.

The woman was awake and aware but dominated by her problem and came to Jesus consciously.

These two women present to us the two main ways people end up experiencing the divine touch. Before we come to Christ, we are dead in our trespasses and sins; spiritual out of touch with God.

And for many, there is no spiritual interest whatsoever.

Many are oblivious of their need for God and seem quite content living a life of total moral abandonment in the world.

And then something dramatic happens – it's like it happened to Jairus' daughter, they suddenly awaken to the reality of the love and salvation of God and turn in a moment to Him.

Jesus comes to them in the midst of their spiritual deadness and literally opens their eyes and gives them life.

Then there are some who are like the woman with the issue of blood.

They have a sense of spiritual need for years and years, and go to many sources to find someone to scratch their spiritual itch; materialism, romance, or maybe they get more religious and try New Age spirituality, or one of the cults.

And they spend their spiritual capital on many things but find no relief, not sense of satisfaction.

Then, they hear someone speak about the power of Jesus to heal and so they venture into a crusade or a church, or read a Christian book.

And voila! Life! They find what it is they've been looking for.

We all come to Christ a different way and this is why it's fun to hear people's testimonies; but typically we either follow a long route of spiritual seeking till we find Christ, or we're just kind of wandering through life mindlessly, oblivious of our spiritual need, when all of a sudden, our eyes are opened and we find ourselves being called out of the darkness of spiritual death into the light of God's love.

And that leads us to the second thing we can learn from this passage . . .

Luke tells us (8:42) that Jairus' daughter was 12, and here we read the woman had the flow of blood for 12 years.

So, when that little girl was born that woman's health problems began.

For 12 years Jairus' daughter grew and became the delight of her father, a wealthy and influential man in the community of Capernaum.

And during that same 12 years, that woman grew increasingly distant and cut off from her friends and family because of her affliction and its resulting ritual impurity.

Then the girl died, and Jairus sent for Jesus.

It was while Jesus was going to his house to touch his 12 year old daughter that the woman with the 12 year old affliction touched Him.

Coincidence? There are no coincidences in the Kingdom of God and the lesson is this – God's plan for us may take a long route to its conclusion, but not a moment or step is wasted.

Though it took 12 years, all the pieces fell into place in God's perfect timing so that that woman would be in that crowd at the precise moment when Jesus was on His way to Jairus' house.

12 years earlier, though neither Jairus nor the woman knew anything about Jesus because He hadn't begun His ministry yet, each of their lives had embarked on a path that led to this moment – and God knew from the beginning it would be so.

Most of us can probably look back on our lives before coming to Christ and now see how the Lord had been directing and steering the circumstances at crucial points, though at the time we were oblivious to it.

His sovereign divine providence ensured that we would come to that crucial moment when either He touched us, or we found ourselves reaching out to touch Him.

The point is – we owe our lives & eternity to Him.

7. Sight to the blind • 9:27-31

²⁷ When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out

The words Matthew uses here mean to cry out without let up & with a shrieking intensity.

and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" ²⁸And when He had come into 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." ²⁹ Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." ³⁰And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See *that* no one knows *it*." ³¹ But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.

Take careful note of how the men called to Jesus – they addressed Him as the "Son of David." This was a clear Messianic title.

Then as now, blindness was an especially difficult affliction and so was thought to be the result of some really bad sin the blind person had committed.

When the blind men approached Jesus, He asked about their faith; whether they believed he was able to heal them of blindness.

They had already asked for mercy while following at a distance, but now that they are face to face with Him, Jesus asks if they genuinely believe He is able to give them sight.

Jesus knew the answer and what He would do for them – but it was crucial that these two men give voice to their faith and express specifically their trust in Him.

Their response shows in what they believe – they call Jesus, "Lord."

After healing them, Jesus then warned them not to tell anyone.

Actually, again Matthew picks really strong words to describe how Jesus commanded them – "sternly warned" is a Greek word which means to strongly scold!

Why would Jesus tell them to keep quiet?

He'd already performed hundreds of public miracles!

The reason for telling *these* guys to be silent was because of how they saw Him – as the Messiah.

Jesus knew it was this public affirmation that would eventually lead to the outbreak of hostility toward Him from the rulers.

Jesus was eventually executed under the charge that He was claiming to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

There was already a lot of Messianic expectation on the part of the common people and several fakers had already come on the scene who had led revolts against Rome that resulted in great trouble for the Jewish nation and its rulers.

So anyone claiming to be the Messiah, or being heralded by the people as the Messiah came in for immediate hostility and opposition from the leaders who saw their position & security threatened.

These two blind men had begun by identifying Jesus as the Son of David, the Messiah, and when they go forth healed, they are going to be like Messianic business or calling cards and Jesus knows they will only stir up unnecessary trouble for Him.

Despite the warning, they go forth and do the very thing He told them not to do.

8. A mute speaks • 9:32-34

32 As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed.

It's not certain, but what Matthew may mean us to understand is that the men who'd just been healed of blindness were the ones who brought this mute guy to Jesus.

33 And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!"

Up until now, when Matthew has spoken of Jesus healing people, he's described it as being by a touch, or a word – but here, it's just said he *was* healed – Jesus isn't even mentioned as instrumental in the healing.

Matthew's omitting Jesus is with purpose.

You see, a mute demon-possessed person was considered a totally impossible case – even more so than raising someone from the dead.

The OT prophets had raised the dead to life, so people knew about that.

Lepers, the blind, the lame – even Gentiles, there were OT occurrences of all of these – but demon possessed mutes were considered to be absolute impossibilities – and here's why.

Jewish exorcists believed that the key to delivering a person who was demon possessed was to secure the demon's name.

Once you had its name, you could take authority over it and cast it out.

So they spent most of their time trying to trick the demon into giving up its name.

But how are you going to get a mute person to give up the demon's name?

In their theology and experience, a mute demonized person was the devil's coup d'etat over mankind.

And that's why Matthew doesn't even mention Jesus here – he just says the mute man was brought to Him, and he was delivered!

It's like it was the most casual and expected thing in the world!

Jesus didn't have to work Himself into a sweat trying to arm-wrestle this demon into giving up its name.

He just did it – and it was done – and *then* the man spoke.

What a great lesson for us – one we've talked about before – that because God is all powerful – when He works, when He heals, He doesn't exert effort!

He just does what He does and it's done!

[Our thoughts about healing; headache versus cancer]

[No harder for God. Not about effort, or ability – only about will.]

And since we know His will is perfect, and includes His surpassing love for us, must trust that when we aren't healed, *that* state is best for us.]

When the people saw this deliverance of the mute man – it knocked their 1st century Birkenstocks off – this was simply too much for them.

That is, the common people felt that way – the Pharisees realized this was a demonstration of a

kind of power they were total strangers to and so we read . . .

34 But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.”

These guys have been *envious* of Jesus because His *true* holiness has revealed their *sham* holiness for what it was.

They were *suspicious* of Him because His teaching of the law, so clear and so well founded on the Word of God, exposed their thread-bare interpretations and silly traditions for the manure it was.

Now that they have irrefutable evidence of His power to heal and work miracles, all they can do is attack Him!

They cannot deny the miracles themselves, so they attack their source.

They say that Jesus’ power comes from the devil.

Though Matthew doesn’t deal with it here, a but later we will see this theory of the Pharisees raised again, that Jesus was operating in the power of the devil.

And Jesus nukes that idea with another brilliant piece of logic – the power that was being demonstrated was being used to annihilate the very kingdom and works of the devil!

In war, a kingdom does not destroy itself with its own power – it uses it on the enemy!

Then we have the verses we studied last Sunday.

9. The motive for the use of His power • 9:35-38

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

[1] MacArthur, John *Commentary on Matthew*