

Matthew 20-01-26a

Good morning, this is the Sunday morning service at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We are going to continue this morning our study in the Gospel of Matthew. We're in chapter 8, looking at this three-fold presentation of three miracles each, and looking at the place that these occupy in the Gospel, taken somewhat out of chronological order in order to make a point.

And you can be digging through your mental closet to remember what that point is that we discerned last time, as we take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and prepare to take another expedition into the treasure house of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we're grateful that you've granted to us another day, another opportunity to exploit the wonderful victory that the Lord Jesus Christ has shared with us in conquering sin and death, fulfilling your plan and purpose of salvation, taking us to himself as your unique gift, and assigning to us such a wonderful set of challenges and opportunities. We pray that as we look at this portion of your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts in a way that is meaningful and memorable, and will influence our thoughts and actions in the days ahead.

We pray that as we look at this narrative, this section of the Lord Jesus Christ and his actions in the early days of his ministry, that we will find fruitful sources of thinking and application, so that we can fulfill your plan and purpose both now and in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you have not already, you'll want to turn to Matthew chapter 8. And over the last week or two, I've suggested that we not only see this in its own context, but in the context of the other Gospels as well, sort of a comparison and contrast. And just by way of quick review, the fourfold presentation of the Lord Jesus in the three synoptic Gospels and John was suggested to us, or we found something of an analogy in the faces of the cherubim that surround God's throne, each with a different emphasis. And so you think about the Gospel before us, the Gospel of Matthew, presenting Jesus as the conquering king, the Messiah to Israel.

Primarily, this is why you so often find fulfilled prophecy alluded to and the Old Testament Scriptures presentation of Jesus in his authority. And in particular, this section that we're looking at in chapter 8, having given the principles and the outline of the policies for the kingdom in chapters 5, 6, and 7, we now are going to see demonstrations of Jesus' authority. And this is in keeping with the theme of the Gospel, which is Jesus as the king, the king of Israel.

He's going to be the king of the nations. And so the authority of his words is demonstrated and backed up by his authority as it will be demonstrated here in these next few sections of chapter 8 and 9. Just in comparison, when you think about Mark,

Mark primarily presents Jesus in his role as servant. I love the title that Jody Dillow gave his book, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, because we emulate the example of the Lord Jesus in service, in sacrifice.

The law of love says that we put others' interests ahead of our own, and this is what the Lord Jesus did. And there's a famous play, you can look it up. The title is the only thing that's relevant, but it's called *She Stoops to Conquer*.

And Jesus said, it is the last who will be first. The one who humbles himself under the mighty hand of God is the one that will be exalted. And all you have to do is read Philippians chapter 2, in that first part of the chapter, talking about the Lord Jesus who humbled himself.

And suffered the reduction of his glory to human form, and was obedient even to the death of the cross. This is the reason that God has highly exalted him. If we want to succeed, and this is something that Jesus is going to speak of in our passage this morning, success is not at the end of the road that people think it is.

Happiness and fulfillment, satisfaction, meaning in life, is not found where people typically look for it. There is an ironic turn to life. It is the strategy of the indirect approach.

It is in giving things up that they end up overtaking us. So this is, one part of it is emphasized in the Gospel of Matthew. This is the end result.

God's blessing, God's assignment of authority and opportunity and accountability. And anyone who has the exercise of authority, and almost everybody does. We all have at least authority over our own soul.

We're captain of our ship and master of our fate. But many times we have authority, whether it is children, whether it is in a business, or whether it is, we're like the centurion that we began looking at last time. He says, I exercise authority.

I say to one, go, and he goes. To another one, come, and he comes. I'm a man under authority.

I have those over me. I understand how it works. I both know how to function under it and how to exercise it.

And so in the Matthew and Mark combination, you have Jesus in his authoritarian aspect as the king, and this is the lion face of the cherub, the lion of the tribe of Judah. He's even in secular realms called the king of beasts. And then you have the ox face, which is the servant.

It's not a lack of power, but it is power under control. It is disciplined power. It is directed

power.

It is service power. And so you have many wonderful miracles and actions, and it doesn't present a Jesus who's kicking his toe in the dirt and saying, aw, shucks. But it is Jesus manifest in his role as servant, the suffering servant, taking on himself the woes and the cares and the sicknesses and the diseases and ultimately the sins and iniquities of the people of Israel first and the world ultimately.

That's the gospel of Mark. You remember the gospel of Luke is Jesus as the son of man. We're going to see that term occur in our passage this morning, the son of man.

What does it mean? Why is it used? How is it used? When is it used? But this is Jesus in his humanity, and it is going to ultimately be reflected in the book of Hebrews where we do not have a high priest unacquainted with what it is to be human, but he has existed in the flesh. He has been through the things that we go through. So we have a high priest who is sympathetic, who understands firsthand the challenges and the wearing pressures and the difficulties and the pressure of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

He understands those things intimately, and therefore when he is our intercessor and our mediator, we have confidence and he represents us before God's throne. But in the book of Luke, we have Jesus with an emphasis on his humanity. And then of course in the gospel of John, this of course is the face of the man that you see in the four faces of the cherubim.

And then of course the fourth gospel starts right out talking about the deity of Jesus, the word, who was with God and was God and became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. And this represented by the face of the eagle, which represents strength, the strength of God, those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength, they will mount up with wings as eagles. So this four-fold emphasis is helpful to remember, particularly as we go forward in the gospel and see how Matthew organizes this material.

And so we've seen that in chapters 8 and 9, we're going to have a three-fold set containing three miracles each. The first one of these was the cleansing of the leper. This is the first of a three-fold set of miracles that are depicted in chapter 8 and chapter 9. We're looking at the second of those three miracles.

Hopefully we'll do the second and third today and get a ways into chapter 8. But we talked about the healing of the centurion's servant and the recognition of Jesus' authority. And a question I ask at the beginning of the class is, do you remember what the theme of this section is, which is actually the theme of the book of Matthew in general? This is a book about Jesus as the King of Israel. Matthew presents it in a number of different ways.

The emphasis here, having given an authoritative message of the kingdom, he is going

to now demonstrate that authority. And Matthew organizes these miracles that are not given in a chronological fashion. They are given in a thematic fashion.

And we know this from looking at the other gospels. We did that in the last week or two. But they are organized here to emphasize that Jesus is not just talking kingdom.

He is going to manifest the power by which he will rule the kingdom. And there is a three-fold presentation. In all four gospels you will find this.

But there are three things that Jesus does in his role as the Son of Man, and as the Messiah to Israel, and as the Savior of the world. He will do three things. And he began it back in Matthew chapter 4. And over and over again we are going to see it.

After the temptations in Matthew chapter 4, you will remember Jesus heard that John had been put in prison. He departed to Galilee, leaving Nazareth. He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea.

You have the fulfillment of the Isaiah prophecy there. And in verse 17, from that time Jesus began to preach. He began to preach, saying, Change your mind, repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And if you look down at verse 23, Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues. Preaching is number one, teaching is number two. And in the next verse, They brought him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, paralytics, and he healed them.

Preaching, teaching, and healing. It's a three-fold emphasis. Preaching is not the same as teaching.

My style of presentation has been accused of being much more teaching than preaching. Preaching is exhortation to action. I think teaching should drive toward application.

But teaching gives you the information to reflect on, to make a part of your time of devotions or meditations or cogitations, figuring out how should I then live. The teaching is content of divine truth. In this particular context, what will you then do? How should we then live? Preaching says, change your mind, repent, get up and do.

It is a call to action. And so there's typically preaching, which is a sounding of the shofar, a blowing of the trumpet, here's a problem that needs fixing. Teaching gives the content that the Holy Spirit can use to lead and to guide for us in this day and age.

And then healing is the demonstration. So in Jesus' preaching, remember John the Baptist was preaching. He didn't do much teaching.

The ministry of John the Baptist is a call to action. Repent, the kingdom is in hand. There's one coming after me.

You better pay attention. It's a call to action, that's preaching. Jesus is preaching, he is teaching, and he is healing.

And healing is, a lot of us can preach, a lot of us can teach, but the healing is something unique to the Lord Jesus, distinguishing him as separate and apart as from God, as manifesting God's power directly. And that healing is going to include the things that you see in verse 24. Whether it is diseases or torments, demon possession, uncontrollable action or no action.

Notice it says epileptics and paralytics. This is lack of control. Either your body is doing things you don't want it to do, or it's not doing things you do want it to do.

And Jesus has the power and the authority to remove diseases, to remove torments, to remove demons, to activate quiescent nerves that will not carry motor function commands to the limbs and so on, and also to correct lightning storms in the nervous system where actions are uncontrollable and people are throwing fits and foaming at the mouth and throwing themselves on the ground and so on. He healed them, healed them all. Well, we're going to see this pattern reflected.

We have had the teaching in 5 through 7. Now we are going to get this healing section in chapter 8 and the second miracle with the centurion. As you look at this three-fold set, the suggestion has been made, it's not original to me, but you have the leper who is an Israelite, you have the centurion who is a Gentile, and then the next episode we have here in verses 14 and 15 of chapter 8 is Peter's mother-in-law, when Jesus comes into Peter's house Peter's wife's mother is lying sick with a fever, he touches her hand, the fever leaves her, and she arose and served them. And by organizing these three episodes of healing in the way that he does, Matthew pictures the movement of the gospel that comes first to Israel, to those who are dead while they live, they've got this corrupting, defiling problem, and Jesus makes that go away and then gives a command which as we know from the other gospels is not followed.

He says, show yourself to the priest, you should be a witness and a manifestation. This will communicate something. It communicates not only the beauty of the Leviticus 14 cleansing ritual that we saw last time, but who brought this about? Everybody is going to ask, we've not seen this kind of thing in Israel.

When was the last time somebody was miraculously cleansed of this wasting skin disease? Well, it's Yeshua of Nazareth that did this. And it is a testimony both to Jesus' respect for and fulfillment of the law, but also his own authority manifest. And it's pretty tough to argue when, as you can see when you go to John 9, the man born blind, and he says, you know, when has it ever been seen that somebody could do this? He must be from God.

I mean, that's an obvious conclusion. So it's that testimony. But in this sequence of

healing the leper, and the question of whether he is going to obey the law and be a testimony, then you have the Gentile Roman centurion.

And look at what Jesus says. This is where we pick up this morning in verse 10. Jesus marveled when the man said, all you have to do is speak the word.

I understand authority. And Jesus says, assuredly, I say to you, this is Matthew 8, 10. I have not found such great faith in Israel.

I have not found this faith in Israel. And I say to you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It's an interesting thing because we're looking at this section of healing, but Jesus makes a point based on the centurion's faith. And he contrasts the Gentile centurion with the lack of faith in Israel. And it's a picture of he came unto his own and his own received him not.

You find this in Acts when Paul is trying to win the Jews in the synagogue and he basically shakes the dust off his feet and says, from now on we're going to the Gentiles. You all won't listen. And that's the movement of the gospel message, certainly in the early days of the church age.

Even the church, the day of Pentecost is entirely a Jewish affair. It's a Jewish feast. The Holy Spirit comes on a collection of Jews.

The first generation in the church is Jewish. The apostles are Jewish. The Lord Jesus himself is Jewish.

But because of the rejection in Israel, those branches are broken out of God's plan and the Gentile wild olive branches are grafted in. And you see that reflected here. But look at what happens right after this healing episode.

You then go to the house of Peter. And once again you're in a Jewish context. And Peter, the apostle to the Jews, where Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, you find that there is a restoration and there is service.

She gets up and serves. And many people see in this the movement from the gospel first coming to the Jews, then to the faithful Gentiles, and ultimately coming back to the Jews in the kingdom, who will rise and serve. They've been afflicted with a fever, but Jesus drives the fever out.

They can rise and serve. So it's an interesting idea, I think. But I'm intrigued by a couple of details as we go through chapter 8. First of all, he says many will come from east and

west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I've often quoted this, including the north and south. But here in Matthew it says many will come from east and west. What does east and west connote? What do we have by way of a context for that? You say, well, obviously that's somebody that's not in Israel.

Well, there's people in the north and people in the south that aren't in Israel. Why does he say east and west? What does the Bible have to say about east and west, and why would we care? Well, if you look at the Old Testament, one of the most pertinent and significant things you can say is out of Psalm 103, verse 12. And you'll recognize this.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. And it is a reminder, not so much that that idea is in this passage, but east and west are limitless in their direction. You can head east and you can keep going east indefinitely.

I'm not sure how significant an idea it was in the ancient world. They weren't really globally aware. I don't think they knew that there was a north pole and a south pole.

But for us, you actually can go north so far and then you have to go south. If you get up to the Arctic sooner or later, you're going to have to go south and vice versa. But east and west is the direction of time measurement.

This is the rising and the setting of the sun. And it is significant both time-wise and distance-wise. How far is the east from the west? It's an unmeasurable distance.

And even in ancient days, what man didn't know, God did know. And so he puts in the heart of the psalmist this notion that as far as the east is from the west, that's how far our transgressions have been removed from us. What a wonderful promise.

When we confess our sins and in his faithfulness and in his justice, God forgives us and cleanses us, forget about it. Don't go back and dig up the old bones. Those transgressions, as far as God is concerned, are out of sight and out of mind.

It doesn't mean that the consequences of bad behavior, of sinfulness on our part, are not going to persist. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, and we restore our fellowship and function with God, we saw this looking at the Song of Solomon on Thursday night. The ideal of Solomon's romantic marital love that is depicted in that book was ultimately destroyed when you look at the record in Kings and Chronicles.

Solomon lost that ideal that you see depicted in the Song of Songs by first departing from his relationship with God. Relationship with God is paramount. We love because he first loved us.

And it is the primary, first and foremost commandment to love the Lord our God that enables us to love our neighbor as ourselves. The vertical post of the cross is the one that

holds up the horizontal. And that love for God and his love for us is what enables us to love one another.

So that has to come first. So another interesting reference to the East and West, and there are many in the Old Testament, but even geographically when you go to Joshua 11, verse 3, you have the Canaanites on the East and on the West. In Isaiah 9, verse 12, you have Aramaeans on the East and the Philistines on the West.

And so this is the idea that they are non-Israelite, non-God-worshiping people. You've got the Aramaeans or the Syrians on the East, you've got the Philistines on the West. And in Isaiah 9, verse 12, they devour Israel with gaping jaws.

And in spite of all this, God's anger does not turn away, and his hand is still stretched out. This is Israel in rejection and Israel in rebellion. And so these Gentile nations prevail and are instruments of God's judgment coming from the East and coming from the West.

So what kind of operation is it where you have many coming from the East and the West? Is it for judgment or is it for fellowship and communion? A better Isaiah verse, and the last one we'll look at from the Old Testament, is Isaiah 59, verse 19. So they will fear the name of the Lord from the West and his glory from the rising of the sun. Which is what? East.

They will fear the name of the Lord from the West and his glory from the rising of the sun, for he will come like a rushing stream which the wind of the Lord drives. A rushing stream which the wind of the Lord drives. Fearing the name of the Lord and respect for his glory.

And that, of course, is what Jesus is talking about. That there is coming a day, and it was foreseen in the Old Testament. Abraham is going to be a father of many nations, and he and his descendants are going to be a blessing.

A light to the Gentiles. So it's not accidental, it's not a flippant thing that Jesus says when he says many are going to come from the East and West. And it says in your New King James here, sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But this word sit down is a technical word. It's *anacalino*. We get recline.

Recline is from the *clino* part of that. And *ana* means down. So recline down is the idea.

And this is used to recline at the table. Recline at the table. So this is not just sitting on a sofa or sitting down to chat with a mint julep or something.

This is sitting down at the table. There is a banquet in view. This is a technical word for sitting down to a banquet, sitting down to a meal, sitting down together.

And the form here is such that there's a passive idea. They will be sat down. They will sit

themselves down.

There's a middle passive idea here. And it's a participle. And they are sitting down ones.

Many will come from East and West, and they are going to be ongoing participants. It's not like a one-time thing. Well, nice to see you.

We had you over, and we'll never see you again. When I was at the Naval Academy in the summertime, one of the members of our company was actually from Columbia, and his father worked at the World Bank. Really nice guy.

And, of course, he couldn't go back to Columbia on a week of leave or something. So one summer he came home with me, and he was here. And it was great having him here.

And he was checking out whether he was interested in the things of God or not. We had a lot of time to talk on the way down here and on the way back. And really wonderful, wonderful guy.

But he only came once. But the great thing is those who come from the East and West and sit down at this banquet, it is a characteristic. They are sitting down ones.

It's kind of like faithing ones. It's a pattern. It's an ongoing characteristic.

And this is going to be a type of person. It's not an event. It's a quality.

These people are ones who are qualified to sit down at the banquet table of the Messiah. What a wonderful thing. And Jesus talks about it in the context of the Gentile, Centurion, and his faith.

Faith is the qualification. It's not birth. It's not genealogy.

It's not we have Abraham as our father or we have Jacob as our father. It is faith. And he says, I haven't seen this faith among the sons of the kingdom.

The sons, the ones who have it as a birthright, are going to be where? The sons of the kingdom, verse 12, will be cast into outer darkness. These who are unqualified and outside are going to be brought in and sat down and assigned this as an ongoing privilege. But the ones who are born to it, who should have seen it, the sons of the kingdom will be cast into, they are cast.

Some people are seated. Others are ejected. This is a well-run fancy restaurant.

You start creating a ruckus or you're there for the wrong reason or you didn't wear a tie like you were supposed to. They will cast you out. You're not allowed in.

No shirt, no shoes, no service. There are places that require a coat and tie. Gentlemen's clubs used to require people to be dressed up.

And if you don't have the right clothes, out you go. Jesus will tell a parable to that effect later. The sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness.

We have the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Paul talks about this in Romans, crying out, Abba, Father. We have a heritage.

We have a new birth. But we can be ejected and cast into the outer darkness just as quickly as the sons of this kingdom. Just as quickly and on the same basis.

Are we those who by our faith recognize... And this was my question. I looked at every single commentary I have and everybody had all kinds of wonderful ideas about this, that and the other. But nobody answered this question.

See if you can answer this question for me. When you write your commentary, this is the question I want the answer to. What is it that the centurion believed? Jesus says, I haven't seen this faith anywhere in Israel.

What faith? What is the content of what the centurion believed? Did he believe Jesus was the Son of God? Did he believe that he was raised or was going to be raised the third day? Did he believe that Jesus was virgin born? Did he believe that he was divine? What is it the centurion believed? Jesus compliments this faith and extols it above the sons of the kingdom. What faith? Jesus can speak healing. Right? That's the point of the spear here.

I'm thinking about the centurion. That's the first point. But what are the implications? What's the underpinning of that faith? The centurion looks at Jesus and Jesus says, I will come and heal.

And he says, I'm not worthy to have you under my roof. What does that tell you? Do Romans typically think they are the master race and they are there to subjugate these conquered unruly Jews? What Roman is going to say to a Jew and not a well-off one, not a noted one, not a widely respected scion of the community, he's going to say, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof. What does the centurion believe? So that he goes on to say, I understand authority and all you need to do is speak a word.

He believes all of those things. I don't know if he's heard about the coming resurrection yet, but he believes that Jesus is superior to himself, therefore superior to any Jew or any Roman, and that he can exercise authority by the spoken word over disease at a distance. This centurion believes more about Jesus than he believes about any Roman Pantheon member, any god, any goddess.

He recognizes Jesus for who he is. And Jesus says, that's the faith I have not seen in Israel. Who's at Jesus' right and left hand as he says these words? Remember the guys by the Jordan with John the Baptist, Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip? And he says, I have not seen this faith.

He doesn't say, outside of my disciples, this man outdoes the disciples. What do the disciples believe? This man's faith, the content of his faith, is deeper, surer, and greater than what Jesus has seen even in his own disciples, or he would have accepted them. So, what should the content of our faith be? Does Jesus Christ have authority over my circumstances? If I've got an affliction, and we say, well, you know, the days of healing are over, now we're just kind of stuck with it.

Seriously? Remember our memory verse, the arm of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save. His ear isn't heavy, that he cannot hear. The modality, the means by which God heals, by which God acts, by which God works, the modality of it may have changed, but the authority and the power are unchanged.

And it may not be a miraculous healing. It may not be a deliverance out of a great storm, as we're going to see shortly. It may be a deliverance through.

It may be a working of power in and because of something that we have. But, if our faith is going to be anywhere like the centurions, the content of our faith is, the Lord Jesus Christ has been given all authority in heaven and in earth. That's how this book closes.

Remember Thursday night, we were looking at Song of Solomon, and it's a bit of a puzzle when you first approach it, and you say, why is all of this erotic, explicit stuff in here? And I, particularly, had to back up and look at context, and then I had to back up a little more, and I had to keep backing up until I was looking at my whole Bible from the index to the maps. And in the beginning of Genesis, you have the man and the woman, and you have a man leaving his father and mother and cleaving to his wife. You have marriage.

At the end of the Revelation, you have the new Jerusalem coming down as a bride adorned for her husband. You have marriage from beginning to end, and right in the center, you have this crown jewel of the ideal of passionate, erotic, married love. And it fits.

It is a part of the fabric of Scripture and fills a necessary and important purpose in its depiction of what that relationship should be like. When we look at authority and we say, here's one example of authority, and this serves to illuminate all other kinds of authority, whether you are under it or exercising it. When you look at love, that love may be of one particular type, but it reflects on and illuminates other kinds of love.

And the principles that guide it, the doctrines that undergird it, are the same. That's what we're going to see in the Song of Solomon. Here, the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as it is being manifest to Israel is a lesson for us.

If we do not think about the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, His dominant, kingly, head of all things to the Church, power and love and interest in us, and respect for faith that

responds to His teaching and His preaching and His healing power, the Lord Jesus respects it. He admires it. He calls it out and names it.

That is the faith that we need. That is the recognition that we should have. That is the faith that we should exercise in our head.

He is the head of all things to the Church, the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. And if we begin to feel overpowered by circumstance, if we begin to feel trapped, if we begin to feel worn down, if we begin to feel that there is some power greater than the Lord Jesus Christ in our life, we need to come back here and look at this centurion. If Jesus can speak and heal the centurion's servant at a distance, can He speak and address circumstances in our life at a distance? He absolutely can.

Does Jesus know the details of exactly what that servant needs? Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Centurion, you didn't tell me that it was a fever. I thought it was a withered limb. I sent the wrong answer.

It says the servant was healed from that very hour. Jesus not only had the authority, but He had the knowledge, the particular addressing of a specific issue. Jesus sent the answer to that specific problem at a distance.

We think, well, the Lord's in heaven and I'm down here. It doesn't matter. This ought to be something that we look to and think about day by day by day.

Any time we start to feel whelmed or overwhelmed or underwhelmed, any time we begin to think that we're adrift in circumstances, where is the faith? If Jesus didn't find it in Israel, I hope He can find it in me. I hope He can find it in us. It's His authority.

It's His knowledge and it's His love that are at work. And I want to be one of those coming from the West and sitting down in the Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Son and ultimately the Kingdom of the Father. What is the qualification? This faith.

Faith specifically in the identity and the authority of the Son of God. Well, let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to pick up here and see what happens on the Sabbath.