

Introduction:

Last week we looked at the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4. Like I said in an earlier message Matthew organizes his account of Jesus' life and ministry in a very intentional way. Matthew 1-2 talk about Jesus' birth and early life, Matthew 3-4 discuss Jesus' preparation for public ministry with his baptism and temptation. Then in Matthew 5-7 we have Jesus' teaching and specifically it shows the authority that Jesus had especially when compared with the Scribes and teachers around him. Now in chapter 8 Matthew really focuses in on the miraculous authority Jesus had over disease and demons and even the weather. And he begins with three accounts of miraculous healing He heals someone with leprosy, the servant of a centurion, and Peter's mother in law.

And every step along the way Matthew is telling us something important about who Jesus and really is and how we are called to be in relationship it Him.

So lets pray and then dive into Matthew 8:5-13

Pray:

Read the Word: Matthew 4:5-6

Paint the Picture:

- Just come down from the mountain
- Huge crowds following him
- Heals someone with leprosy
 - Jesus heals him and tells him to present himself the priest
- When he enters Capernaum
 - Centurion comes and cries out to Jesus on behalf of his servant.

Ask the Question:

- What is Capernaum
 - Small by our standards medium sized by ancient standards
 - Fishing village
 - Where Jesus did much if his ministry

- Also a city that Jesus condemns later on due to their lack of faith.
 - Matthew 11:23-24
- Important backdrop as we read the next verses
 - Repetitive reading: A Beautiful Mind
- What is a centurion
 - Leader in the roman army who would have been in charge of around 100 troops.
 - He is not like the top dog but he also is not your normal foot soldier
 - Backdrop of...
 - Oppression
 - Pagan rule
 - High taxation
 - Civil unrest

Paint the picture:

- Massive crowd
- Kingdom of heaven
 - Freedom from Rome
- Here comes a representation of their oppression

Transition:

We can already begin to imagine what the crowd might have been thinking when but lets look at how Jesus responds...

Read the Word: Matthew 8:7-9

Paint the Picture:

- Jesus surprisingly offers to come to his house
 - Rarely offers anything the person does not request
 - Being friendly with the enemy
 - Cleanliness laws

Ask the Question:

- Why would Jesus Offer?
 - Reveal the heart of the centurion
- What is revealed by the centurion's response?
 - Recognizes who Jesus is

- Recognizes who he is in the presence of Jesus
- Not degrading but elevating
- St. Augustine
- By viewing himself as unworthy, he showed that he had welcomed Christ to come not merely into his house but also into his heart. He would not have said this with such great faith and humility if he had not already welcomed in his heart the One who came into his house
- Jesus can act with a word across time and space
 - Jewish world not foreign to healers
 - But God acted with a word
- Proclaims Jesus' authority over disease
 - Points to his own experience
 - God reveals truth in many experiences and backgrounds

Transition:

The centurion in these few words claims something about Jesus that sets him apart from all others. He places Jesus on the same level as the creator of the universe. What was the crowd thinking did they realize the magnitude of what the centurion was saying? If they didn't we will see Jesus was going to make sure they did...

Read the Word: Matthew 8:10-13

Paint the Picture:

- In no one in Israel have I found such faith **(10)**
 - His family
 - His disciples
 - Later scholars
- Jesus is not naïve
 - He knows what the crowd is thinking
 - He is a centurion
 - He is the reason we suffer
 - He represents oppression and pagan rule
 - We are God's chosen people how can he claim this centurion has more faith than us.
- I will gather the people of the world under my lordship
 - I don't care if your labeled a Centurion or a Jew

- I don't care how you identified Where does your allegiance lie
- In the kingdom of heaven it does not matter your pedigree if you reject the King.
- Nothing new
 - Abraham Genesis 12
 - Psalms
 - Isaiah
 - Septuagint Baruch
- The kingdom of heaven is coming. I am the king and I came to bring all people into the kingdom.

Conclusion:

I can imagine the crowd standing stunned as Jesus words sunk in and I imagine the conversations that took place weeks later when everyone heard that the servant had been healed. Jesus could have just said this during one of his teachings but instead it had been ordained that this centurion would come and declare that who Jesus is. Then Jesus responded to the crowd and the centurion in such a way that his message would be relived over and over again.

We marvel at this account but what does this passage teach us about who Jesus is and how we should live as his disciples.

Two lessons:

- Resist the temptation to be identified by any thing other than a follower of Jesus Christ.
- Deep mature faith in Jesus Christ is more than intellectual assent it is a lived reality
 - More than affirming the structural integrity of a chair it's deciding to sit.

Pray.