

SETTING THINGS RIGHT

MATTHEW 8



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T . M . M O O R E

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Setting Things Right: Matthew 8
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Matthew 8: Introduction

For three chapters, Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God. Now it was time to start bringing it near to the world.

In Matthew 8 we see the power of the Kingdom wielded to set things right in a sin-broken world. Jesus demonstrates His power over sin and its effects, and sets a pattern for us to follow in seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God. We should expect His power to be at work in and through us in ways appropriate to our day and time.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 A Leper Healed

Pray Psalm 146.1, 2.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the LORD;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Sing Psalm 146.1, 2, 10.

(Hallelujah! What a Savior!: [*Man of Sorrows*](#))

Praise the Lord, my soul, give praise! While I live, His Name I'll raise!

And exalt Him all my days – God forever reigns in Zion!

Read and meditate on Matthew 8.1-4.

Prepare.

1. How did the leper approach Jesus?

2. What did Jesus tell him to do?

Meditate.

The apostle Paul reminds us that the Kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power (1 Cor. 4.20). Having spoken of the Kingdom and its requirements, Jesus now comes down from the mountain to bring the power of the Kingdom to bear in a sinful world.

The Kingdom has power to reverse the effects of sin and the curse. The leper in this passage recognized that. He came to Jesus and worshiped him, which probably indicates that he fell on his knees before Jesus and bowed. The power of the Kingdom flows to such as worship God and have faith in Him. This man showed his faith by indicating that he knew Jesus had the power to heal him, and he hoped that He would do so.

Jesus responded by a spoken word and a healing touch. Words and deeds are the way that Kingdom power flows to reverse the damage sin has wrought in the world. Jesus instructed the healed leper to follow the Old Testament Law in having his healing confirmed and a gift offered in gratitude to God (cf. Lev. 14.4-32). This was a very complicated and drawn out rite, and it would not always be required. Once the work of Jesus was completed, in sacrificing Himself for all sins, all other sacrifices would cease (cf. Heb. 10.1-9). But for now, it was necessary – to fulfill all righteousness – that this healed leper should fulfill the requirements of the Law. By so doing he would provide “a testimony” to the priests. His testimony would be of his faith in God. But it would also be of his having been healed by Jesus. He would report to the priests both that Jesus had healed him and that He had instructed him to keep the Law. Thus a twofold witness would have been given.

In Matthew 8 Jesus will provide numerous examples of how we should expect to see the power of the Kingdom of God overturning the effects of sin and making all things new. The way we experience and express that power may not be exactly like the way Jesus did. Nevertheless, He is giving us power to seek and advance His Kingdom, and we should make good use of it (Acts. 1.8).

Reflect.

1. What do we learn from the leper about how to approach Jesus for our needs?
2. Why did Jesus insist that the leper should carry out the full obligations of the Law? Was it so that he could *be* healed, or because he *had been* healed? What do we learn from this about keeping the Law?
3. What do we learn about the power of God's Kingdom from this incident?

*With great fervor before Jesus' knees, the leper pleaded with him with sincere faith. He discerned who Jesus was. He did not state conditionally, "If you request it of God" or "If you pray for me." Rather, he said simply, "If you will, you can make me clean." He did not pray, "Lord, cleanse me." Rather, he leaves everything to the Lord and makes his own recovery depend entirely on him. Thus he testified that all authority belongs to him. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 25.1**

O Lord, let Your power be at work in me today as I...

Pray Psalm 146.3-10.

Renew your trust in God alone for the day ahead. Call upon Him to help in all your work, and to strengthen you against every foe.

Sing Psalm 146.3-10.

Psalm 146.3-10 (Hallelujah! What a Savior! [*Man of Sorrows*](#))

Trust we not in prince or man – no salvation's in their hand.

Death shall take them, breath and plans – God forever reigns in Zion!

Blessed are they whose hope resides in the Lord, Christ at His side.

By Him heav'n and earth abide – God forever reigns in Zion!

He is faithful evermore; He gives justice to the poor,
feeds the hungry from His store – God forever reigns in Zion!

Jesus sets the pris'ner free, heals blind eyes that they may see,
lifts those burdened painfully – God forever reigns in Zion!

He the righteous loves the best; wand'ers in His grace are blessed;
needy ones in Him find rest – God forever reigns in Zion!

But the wicked who defame His eternal blessèd Name,
them He brings to ruin and shame – God forever reigns in Zion!

2 Faith Portent

Pray Psalm 67.1-3.

God be merciful to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us,
Selah
That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.
Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.

Sing Psalm 67.1-3.

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

O bless us, Savior, by Your grace, and shine upon us with Your face,
that we Your way may loud proclaim, and tell to all the earth Your fame!

Refrain v. 3 (5)

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord,
Rejoicing in Your holy Word! Rejoicing in Your holy Word!

Read Matthew 8.1-13; meditate on verses 5-13.

Prepare.

1. How did the centurion show his faith to Jesus?
2. How did Jesus respond to his faith?

Meditate.

In Capernaum, to the north, it would not have been uncommon to find Jews and Gentiles rather more mixed in with one another. But it was still the Jewish mindset that the Gentiles were, and always would be, outsiders to the line of Abraham.

But this is because of years of prejudice, built-up by teachers who resented the Gentiles and refused to listen to the teaching of God's Word. We have already seen, in the visit of the Magi, that the Gentile world would be drawn to Jesus. This centurion is but another indication of the broad scope of Jesus' work. Disciples will arise to Jesus from "all the nations" (Matt. 28.18-20). Here is one more portent of the Kingdom's all-encompassing extent.

The centurion came in faith – faith that amazed Jesus (v. 10). He had not seen such faith thus far anywhere in Israel. This was certainly a rebuke to the Jews, even those closest to Him. Jesus used the centurion's complete trust in Him, and recognition of His power and authority, to recall the promise to Abraham, that in him all the nations and families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12.1-3). Faith, like that of the centurion, is the key for Gentiles and Jews alike to enter the Kingdom of heaven. At the same time, those who fancy themselves as having a lock on that Kingdom, by virtue of mere physical descent from Abraham, will be cast out into weeping and gnashing of teeth. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11.6).

Faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2.8, 9). We do well always to ask, seek, and knock for it. Believing in Jesus unleashes power to overturn the terrible effects of sin. A paralyzed and tormented servant was here released from his misery and healed by the mere Word of Jesus, spoken in response to the

request of faith, and accomplished at a distance. This is the power that Jesus wields among and through the faithful citizens and ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

Reflect.

1. What is faith, and how do we exercise it toward Jesus?
2. How can we increase in faith?
3. How should we expect the power of Jesus, unleashed by our faith, to work in our lives?

Jesus is found marveling at the centurion. He turns his attention to him and honors him with the gift of the kingdom. He calls others to the same zeal. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 26.2*

Let Your power be at work in me today, Jesus, as I...

Pray Psalm 67.4-7.

Pray for the nations of the world, that God would revive His churches in them, and bring a great season of awakening to the world.

Sing Psalm 67.4-7.

Psalm 67.4-7 (Solid Rock: [*My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

Let all the nations gladly sing and joyous praise before You bring;
You judge them by Your holy worth and guide the nations of the earth.

Refrain v. 3 (5)

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord,
Rejoicing in Your holy Word! Rejoicing in Your holy Word!

The earth in full its bounty yields – the blessed harvest of the fields.
We gather blessings from Your Word that all the earth may fear You, Lord.

Refrain v. 3 (5)

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord,
Rejoicing in Your holy Word! Rejoicing in Your holy Word!

3 Taker of Infirmities

Pray Psalm 54.1, 2.

Save me, O God, by Your name,
And vindicate me by Your strength.
Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.

Sing Psalm 54.1, 2.

(Beatitudo: [*Father of Mercies, in Your Word*](#))

Save us, O God, by Your great Name.
Vindicate us with power.
Answer our prayer, remove our shame,
in this our desperate hour.

Read Matthew 8.1-17; meditate on verses 12-17.

Prepare.

1. What did Jesus accomplish by these healings?
2. What “methods” did He use, and what do these suggest about His power?

Meditate.

Matthew continues reaching back to the Old Testament to explain Jesus and His work. He cites Isaiah 53.4 to explain Jesus’ power to take away illnesses and deliver us from spiritual oppressors. But that familiar passage deals more with His carrying our *sins* away, bearing them for us and being stricken in judgment because of that.

We cannot fail to make the connection between sin and spiritual and physical maladies – demon possession, illness, blindness, paralysis, and all the rest. These are not visited upon us necessarily because of *our* sin (cf. Jn. 9.1-5); mostly, they beset us because *sin is in the world*, and sin affects all aspects of life in the world. By taking away the sickness and fever of Peter’s mother, healing the demon-possessed, and curing those who had a variety of illnesses, Jesus demonstrated that He has power of the *effects* of sin, and sin itself.

Sin is the original, chronic, everywhere-pervasive pandemic which causes misery, suffering, sorrows, pain, and death. And Jesus came to take sin away, so that, even though we may yet experience various maladies, all who know Jesus enter into His victory over sin *now*, and can rejoice and give thanks even when pandemics befall us. For we know that, should our mortal bodies – temporal and frail as they are – succumb to the effects of sin in the sinful world, Jesus has taken away our infirmities, having borne them in His own body, and nothing can separate us from Him. We rejoice, that is, in the midst of trials and suffering, because we know these have already been taken away from us, and soon enough, we will bear them no more.

Notice Jesus’ method: touching and speaking. It’s not the only way Jesus brings newness to the world (cf. Jn. 2.1-11 – here He simply *thought*), but it suggests to me that we need to stay close to Jesus, both so that we can *hear* Him speaking to us, and *know His Presence* and glory. When Jesus touches us, and when He speaks His Word to us, we know that our infirmities – be they ever so persistent or pernicious – have ultimately been taken by Him, and the joy of our restoration is just a prayer of

gratitude away.

Reflect.

1. How does Jesus take away our infirmities and bear our sicknesses?
2. Why is it important to keep this in mind whenever we're experiencing suffering?
3. How do we know that the Word of Jesus is powerful to help us in resisting the devil and gaining victory in spiritual warfare?

*Note that Isaiah did not say that he merely did away with our infirmities but that he himself bore them. Here Isaiah seems to be speaking of our sins being carried by him, in harmony with John, who said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." How does the Evangelist correlate infirmities and sins? He is either recollecting the Isaiah passage in its plain, historical sense, or he is pointing to the fact that most of our diseases arise from sins of our souls. For if the sum of all diseases, even death itself, has its root and foundation from sin, how much more is this true of most of our bodily diseases? John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew* 27.1*

Strengthen me, Lord, in the face of every infirmity, that I may rejoice and give thanks, and continue to...

Pray Psalm 54.3-7.

Call on the Lord to be your Helper throughout this day, to uphold you, take away all your sins, defend you from the enemy, and receive you as a living sacrifice for this day.

Sing Psalm 54.3-7.

Psalm 54.3-7 (Beatitudo: [*Father of Mercies, in Your Word*](#))

Strangers and foes against us rise, threatening woe and strife;
they have not set You in their eyes, but seek to take our life.

You are the Helper of our soul; You will sustain and bless.
Recompense evil to our foe in Your great faithfulness.

Willingly will we praise You, Lord, gladly adore Your Name!
You have redeemed us by Your Word and blest us by the same.

From all our trouble, by Your grace, You have redeemed us, Lord.
While all our foes in sad disgrace reel backward from Your Word.

4 The Cost of Following Jesus

Pray Psalm 31.1-5.

In You, O LORD, I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed;
Deliver me in Your righteousness.
Bow down Your ear to me,
Deliver me speedily;
Be my rock of refuge,
A fortress of defense to save me.
For You *are* my rock and my fortress;
Therefore, for Your name's sake,
Lead me and guide me.
Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For You *are* my strength.
Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

Sing Psalm 31.1-5.

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*](#))

In You, O Lord, I refuge take; let me not come to shame!
In righteousness deliver me, according to Your Name.
Incline Your ear, my prayer to hear, my Fortress strong to save!

For You my Rock and Fortress are; in Your Name lead and guide.
You rescue me from ev'ry net which wicked men might hide.
My Refuge strong, my spirit long in Your hand shall abide.

Read Matthew 8.1-22; meditate on verses 18-22.

Prepare.

1. Jesus gave a caveat and a command about following Him. Explain each.
2. Jesus saw a great crowd around Him, so He left. Why do you think He did that?

Meditate.

Popularity and numbers aren't all they're cut out to be. Perhaps most pastors today, when they see lots of people flocking to their preaching, will try to figure out how to attract more.

Jesus never showed an interest in big numbers. He knows what's in every person. And He seemed to understand that those crowds, flocking to Him in ever-increasing numbers, weren't exactly on the same page with His project. John tells us that Jesus perceived they wanted to make Him a king, not according to *His* criteria, but theirs (Jn. 6.15). Jesus had not come to earth to make people feel good or scratch their innumerable spiritual and material itches. He had come to bring the Kingdom, and, as He explained, life in the Kingdom is the pursuit of righteousness, even at the expense of self-denial.

Sensing they were about to lose a great opportunity to be in the Jesus band, two men approached

Him, asking permission to follow along. The first, a scribe, had what was probably a comfy job working for the Jewish religious establishment. He may have been thinking that Jesus had a better and more popular gig than the local rabbi and his synagogue. More people, more comforts. Jesus sniffed out his real motivations and shot them out of the sky. Following Jesus means no entanglements with worldly comforts. None. If you're not ready for that, you'll never keep up with Him.

The second man seemed to be wanting to reserve a space in the Jesus band for some future possibility, after his father had died. Perhaps he was thinking he might wait until he could inherit enough to be able to fund himself comfortably among this motley troop. But he wanted to get on list now, before Jesus crossed over to the other side. Jesus made the immediate demand of not waiting for anything when one is called to the Kingdom and glory of God. This young man's priorities weren't Jesus' priorities, and he needed to know that.

What about us? Are we following Jesus, like the growing multitude, because He does something to make us feel good? Are we following Him because, well, He's just the best option currently available? Are we following Him but clinging to worldly things, hoping to enjoy the best of Him and them at the same time? Or are we following Him because He alone has the words of eternal life (Jn. 6.68)?

Jesus will say to us that we'd better count the true cost of following Him: No other ultimate attachments, no delay, no terms but His.

Reflect.

1. Of course we have material needs and daily responsibilities, and these do not mean we can't be followers of Jesus. But how does following Jesus teach us to think about such everyday matters?
2. Jesus indicated that there is a cost to following Him. What is that cost?
3. Why was Jesus not concerned about large numbers of people following Him?

Only the disciples had left behind all present goods and followed him through love of learning. He commands them to cross over from temporary things to eternal things, from the earthly to the heavenly, from the carnal to the spiritual. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444), Fragment 97

I want to follow You today, Lord Jesus, so help me to...

Pray Psalm 31.19-24.

Thank the Lord for the goodness He has laid up for you today as you follow Him into your Personal Mission Field. Seek His courage and strength to follow Him today.

Sing Psalm 31.19-24.

Psalm 31.19-24 (Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*](#))

How great the goodness You reserve for those who fear You, Lord,
Who rest in You and boldly stand before men in Your Word.
You cover them from plots of men; You shelter them, O Lord!

Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown His steadfast love to me!
In my alarm I cried to Him; He heard my fervent plea!
In fear and dread with You I pled; You heard and rescued me!

O love the Lord, all you, His saints! He keeps us faithfully.
But all who act in sinful pride His wrath shall surely see.
Be strong and let your heart not fret; wait on Him constantly!

5 Master of Wind and Sea

Pray Psalm 29.1, 2.

Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Sing Psalm 29.1, 2.

(Toulon: [*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Give praise to God, you children of the earth!
Tell of His strength, proclaim His glorious worth!
Give to the Lord the glory due His Name!
Worship in holiness; His grace proclaim!

Read Matthew 8.1-27; meditate on verse 23-27.

Prepare.

1. How did Jesus still the wind and the sea?
2. How did the disciples respond to this?

Meditate.

Psalm 29 is one of my favorites. In this brief psalm, the word LORD appears 18 times. 18 times in 11 verses! You think David may have been trying to emphasize something? Or perhaps to set us up for something?

And when Jesus speaks to the wind and seas, and they obey His voice, do you suppose those disciples might have thought of Psalm 29?

What is the answer to the disciples' question in verse 27, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" It is the LORD. That is to say, *Jesus* is the LORD!

This is what Matthew does over and over. He makes it very clear that Jesus fulfills Old Testament predictions, descriptions, types, and expectations for the coming of the LORD. And he minces no words and makes no bones about it: Jesus is the LORD. He is the Master of winds and seas and everything else. So if you choose to follow Him, know that the power of Jesus' Word can calm the winds and still the seas, just as surely as it can transform your soul.

Jesus rebuked His disciples. They had enough faith to turn to Him for help, calling Him "Lord"; but they didn't have enough faith not to fear perishing. He welcomed their petition, but rebuked their fear. Fear is a natural response to certain kinds of situations; but for the believer, we need not fear that we might perish. We who believe in Jesus will not perish, but have everlasting life (Jn. 3.16). The security and safety that come from knowing this must keep all our fears in a proper perspective, so that even as we fear, we know where to confidently turn for the Word that calms even raging seas.

Reflect.

1. What does this passage suggest about the power of Jesus' Word?

2. Why did Jesus rebuke the disciples? Is there anything in your life that He might similarly rebuke?

3. How does this passage help us in sharing the Good News of Jesus?

Christ gets into the vessel of his church, always ready to calm the waves of the world. He leads those who believe in him through safe sailing to the heavenly homeland and makes those whom he made to share in his humanity citizens of his land. Christ does not need the vessel, therefore, but the vessel needs Christ. Peter Chrysologus (380-450), Sermons 50.2

I need to hear Your voice, Lord, strengthening me and emboldening me for the day ahead, so that...

Pray Psalm 29.3-11.

Thank God for His sovereignty over all things! Call on Him to guide, protect, keep, and direct you through the day ahead.

Sing Psalm 29.3-11.

Psalm 29.3-11 (Toulon: [*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Over the waters, over thunder's roll,
God's voice creation's mighty pow'rs controls!
Cedars collapse at His majestic Word.
Nations are shaken by our mighty Lord!

God speaks and lightning streaks across the sky.
By His decree He shakes the desert dry.
Speak, Lord, and life to beasts and men is giv'n.
Forests dissolve, and glory rings in heav'n.

Sovereign, the Lord sat o'er the raging flood.
Sovereign forever rules our gracious God!
God will His people bless with strength and peace:
Lord, may Your holy Word to us increase!

6 Ruler of Spirits

Pray Psalm 40.1-3.

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see it and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.

Sing Psalm 40.1-3.

(Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Read Matthew 8.1-34; meditate on verses 28-34.

Prepare.

1. How did Jesus dispatch these demons? What does that tell us?
2. What's different about the people's response to this incident?

Meditate.

Imagine the years of torment and misery these two men must have endured. Consider how their condition must have affected the people around them. They were fierce, intractable, unmanageable, and out of control (v. 28). This is the horror of sin. And what we see in these men is a microcosm of the powerful effects of sin in the world. What we see in Jesus is the power of divine reconciliation and restoration.

Clearly the demons that possessed these men knew Who Jesus was; and they knew what He had done in binding their ruler (Matt. 4.1-11). The demons anticipated that Jesus would “torment” them. If only. He has more devastating plans for them than that, and we get a glimpse of those plans as He casts the demons out here (cf. Rev. 19.7-15).

The demons knew they were done for, so they pled for a measure of mercy from the Lord. It seems strange that Jesus would grant their request to be cast out and sent into a herd of swine. But their request was merely the means of accomplishing His will. Spiritual wickedness in high places affects not only people, but other aspects of the creation as well. Jesus allowed their request, but showed that He intended to use it for their destruction. The swine plummeting into the sea prefigures the ultimate casting of Satan and his ilk in the lake of fire, forever to be in torment. It also recalls the rebels under Dathan being swallowed up by the earth in Numbers 16. Note the power of Jesus' one word: “Go.” As Martin Luther wrote, “One little word shall fell him [the devil].”

It might seem harsh that the herd of swine perished as well. On the other hand, these people were presumably Jews. What were they doing, keeping a herd of unclean creatures? Is there a word of judgment and of enforcing God's Law – a warning or admonition – attached to this?

As has happened so often before, the people who hear about Jesus come flocking out to Him. But things are different now. The power Jesus displayed, and the dramatic way these men were healed struck fear into the people of that city. They begged Jesus "to depart from their region." They feared His Presence among them. What else might He expose about them? What further demonstrations of power might He foist upon them?

Typical of those who are caught up in sin, the people were thinking only of themselves. There is no expression of joy or wonder or gratitude for the healing of the demoniacs, only fear that something bad might happen to them. Caught up with fear for their own interests and wellbeing, they could not see the wonder of grace that occurred.

How like our world today are these Gergesenes! Jesus, the embodiment of God's power and Law, "triggered" fear in them, so – like the schools, courts, public squares, and, sadly, many churches today – they ran Him off. Sin is a terrible blinding force.

Reflect.

1. Why does it make sense that Jesus was able to cast out these demons?
2. What would you have said to the people who came out to Jesus, if you had been present then?
3. How does sin affect the way people see the world? Think about God?

On seeing him, the Gerasenes entreated the Lord to depart from their district. Such people are also found among us. Out of faithlessness they compel the Lord and Savior of the world to depart from the district of their hearts, for according to Scripture, "the Holy Spirit will not enter a perverse soul or dwell in a body enslaved to sin." Chromatius (fl. 400), Tractate on Matthew 43.7

Cleanse me, O Lord, of all that is unclean, and send me forth with Your Word to...

Pray Psalm 40.4-17.

Meditate on the wonderful works God has done for you. Tell them back to Him with praise and thanksgiving. Offer yourself and your day to do His will, according to all His Word. With whom will you share the "good news of righteousness" today?

Sing Psalm 40.4-17.

Psalm 40.4-17 (Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

Off'rings You do not require – open now my ears, O Lord.
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.
Take my life in ev'ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

Lord, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered 'round,
nor will I my lips restrain – let Your precious ways resound!

Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving Lord.

Keep Your mercy not from me; let Your love and truth prevail.

Evil and iniquity make my trembling heart to fail.

Lord, be pleased to rescue me! Let my shelter with You be.

Bring to shame my ev'ry foe, all who would my life destroy;

Bring them down to scorn and woe who at my hurt sing for joy.

Let them come to grief and shame who heap scorn upon my name.

Let them shout for joy and sing who in saving grace delight!

Let them praise to Jesus bring, though affliction be their plight.

Christ, our help, our Savior He! Of us ever mindful be!

7 Deeds and Words

Pray Psalm 145.1-3.

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness is unsearchable.

Sing Psalm 145.1-3.

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*](#))

I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

Read and meditate on Matthew 8.1-34.

Prepare.

1. How many different ways do you see the power of Jesus in the works reported in this chapter?
2. How do the works Jesus did validate the words He taught in chapters 5-7?

Meditate.

Paul reminds us that the Kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power (1 Cor. 4.20). Perhaps he was thinking of this part of the Gospel of Matthew as he wrote those words. Having spent three chapters *speaking* about the Kingdom of God, and calling all who heard Him to seek that Kingdom as the defining priority of their lives, Jesus promptly moved to back up those words with demonstrations of Kingdom power.

And what power we see in Him in chapter 8! He heals with a touch, or even merely a word. He commends great faith and warns half-hearted would-be followers. He overcomes the ravages of leprosy, paralysis, fever, and all manner of sickness; and He initiates the plundering of Satan's domain by casting out demons and sending them to their destruction. He even commands the wind and sea to obey Him.

The power of the Kingdom inheres in Jesus. He rules the world and exercises His power to deliver people from sin and its destructive effects. The works of Jesus validate His words, and should lead us not so much to do the same works He did, but, believing His words, to do works of mercy and righteousness in our own Personal Mission Field, drawing on His power as we rely on His words and seek the progress of His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

To follow Jesus is to trust His words, to increase in His righteousness, and to draw on His power for overturning the ravages of sin and bringing peace and joy into the world. In the Kingdom of God, words and deeds combine to turn the world rightside-up for Jesus.

Reflect.

1. How can you improve in your ability to hear the words of the Kingdom from Jesus?

2. Who are the people in your Personal Mission Field? How should you seek the Kingdom of God among them?

3. What works of Kingdom mercy and righteousness do you expect Jesus to do through you today?

... nothing ought to be to us more urgent than the affairs of the kingdom of heaven. We ought with all diligence to cling to these and not to put them off in the slightest, though our engagements be exceedingly indispensable and pressing.
John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 27.3*

Be at work in me today, O Lord, so that I...

Pray Psalm 145.10-21.

Meditate on all the good and mighty works of the Lord. Praise and thank Him for them. Call on Him to be near you throughout the day, and to grant you rest in Him.

Sing Psalm 145.10-21.

Psalm 145.10-21 (Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*](#))

Your works shall thank You; all Your saints shall bless and praise You, Lord.
Your reign we bless without restraint; Your power fills our words.
Our children we shall educate in all Your splendor, Lord.

Your Kingdom evermore shall be; You reign forever, Lord!
Your works You do so faithfully, according to Your Word.
The falling You uphold and the oppressed You rescue, Lord!

The eyes of all look up to You to meet our needs each day.
Open Your hand, provide the food we need, O Lord, we pray!
Kindness and righteousness You do, O Lord, in every way!

Be near to all who call on You; all those who fear You, bless.
Preserve all those whose love is true; save us in our distress.
Our mouths will speak with praise of You; Your holy Name we'll bless!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What do we learn about following Jesus from this chapter?
2. How would you describe the power Jesus demonstrated here?
3. How was Jesus able to cast out demons? What did that signal?
4. What kinds of things can keep us from seeking the mercy and righteousness of the Kingdom?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 8.1-34? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.