

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 18TH-19TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

TABOO (MATT. 8:1-4)

"WHEN HE CAME DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN..."

During the Sermon on the Mount, a large crowd accumulated. They followed Jesus because of His **teaching, healing,** and now His obvious **authority.**

- Right when the lesson ends a man with leprosy approaches Him, and Jesus gets deep into the gritty side of ministry.

MORE THAN JUST SICK

To have leprosy was much like the AIDS scare of the 80s and 90s, but it was more than just a biological fear. Touching a leper made one ritually unclean, therefore making lepers social and spiritual outcasts. The leper approaching Jesus was a social taboo, but that shows just how strong his faith was.

"LORD, IF YOU ARE WILLING..."

Lord was a title of respect. The leper had full confidence in Jesus' ability, but was unsure of Jesus' willingness to help. When Matt writes, "reaching out His hand, Jesus touched him" it dramatically shows that **Jesus cares nothing of societal taboos, but everything about individuals.**

JUST GO SHOW THE PRIESTS

Periodically, Jesus would tell people to not openly talk about their healing because He didn't want the notoriety to overshadow His time training the disciples. This was the case with the leper's healing. Jesus did want the priests to see that the Messiah-King was present and ministering.

AMAZING (MATT. 8:5-13)

A CENTURION IN CAPERNAUM

Capernaum is in northeast Israel, and was a base of sorts for Jesus' ministry. Shortly after healing the leper, Jesus was met by a Roman centurion seeking healing for his servant.

- Centurions were the backbone of the Roman legions, and even the Bible paints them in a positive light. Obviously this man was a good one.

BREAKING MORE SOCIAL TABOOS

The centurion would've known that the Jews were repulsed by him, but his desperation for his servant to be healed outweighed what others thought.

- The **love** for his servant, **his realization of his own inadequacies,** and his **humility** before Jesus is what prompted Jesus to respond.

"AM I TO COME AND HEAL HIM?"

For a Jew to enter a Roman's home would've been unthinkable, even more so for a teacher. Over time, Israel had taken prohibitions of blending religions to mean God's people cannot associate with non-believers. **We often go to extremes of either compromising beliefs or isolation. Neither is a mature Christian response.**

JESUS WAS AMAZED?

The centurion understood **authority and humility,** and his response "amazed" Jesus.

- Jesus was not above surprise. Without diving too deep, Jesus was fully man and God. He knew all, but also had some human experiences. Jesus had been looking for faith, and He found it in a Gentile soldier.

A REBUKE AND A WARNING TO ISRAEL

The centurion probably didn't understand the full identity of Jesus, but had faith that God was at work. This faith should've been found in "the sons of the kingdom."

- Those "thrown into the outer darkness" are **those that should've identified Jesus but refused. These people will not inherit His eternal kingdom.**

"AS YOU HAVE BELIEVED, LET IT BE DONE FOR YOU."

Jesus told the centurion, "Go. As you believed, let it be done for you." At that moment, the servant was healed. **The kingdom of heaven isn't promised to a people in a particular area or pedigree, but to anyone that has faith in Jesus. The question isn't who are we, but Who is He?**

HEALINGS (MATT. 8:14-17)

HEALING A CLOSE FRIEND'S FAMILY MEMBER

V14-17 give a more intimate account of Jesus healing, this time it was Peter's mother-in-law. Again, we see that Jesus heals by touch, which would've been another social taboo. Religious leaders would never touch women because of the fear of being ceremonially unclean.

"THEN SHE GOT UP AND BEGAN TO SERVE HIM"

This line is intriguing to me. After Jesus touches and heals the woman, "she began to serve Him."

- There may be a huge metaphor in this simple statement. **When we are shown God's grace and love, we should naturally respond with obedience and service.**

DRIVING OUT DEMONS

That same evening, people were brought by the house that were demon-possessed and Jesus "drove out the spirits with a word."

- We have to be careful with demonic possession. Though this does happen, most of the time people are oppressed by evil. **Spirit-filled people are able to pray against demons in Jesus' name.**

"WHAT WAS SPOKEN...MIGHT BE FULFILLED"

Matthew quoted Isaiah, a book written some 700 years before Christ, because he was witnessing the beginning of the prophecies about the Savior taking humanity's sin and sickness away. We learn an important lesson: **the only way to recognize the biblical Jesus is to read the Bible.**

THE COST (MATT. 8:18-22)

JESUS WANTED TO GET AWAY FROM THE CROWD

His most important objective during this time was to train the disciples. So, when the crowds starting detracting from that, He ordered the 12 to find a place where they could be alone with Him.

- There is an important leadership lesson here: **we cannot do it all, so we teach others to disciple as well.**

ONLY ROOM FOR THE COMMITTED FOLLOWERS

The order to cross the Sea of Galilee would have limited the number of people going to a committed few. One of those wanting to go was an educated scribe (teacher of the law) who said, "I will follow wherever you go."

- Most of the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees rejected Jesus, but here we see an exception.

WHEREVER I GO?

Jesus warned the man that following Him isn't just miracles and blessings, but is actually a life dedicated to sacrifice and potential hardships, poverty, and deprivation.

- Now we get personal. **We often proclaim we will "go wherever He goes," but do we really understand the sacrifice of true discipleship?**

JESUS' DEMANDS ARE NOT IMPOSSIBLE

Being a true Christian is a life dedicated to the wants and desires of God, not our selfish desires. It is not easy to not only put God first, but others as well, but this is true Christianity.

- We fail to see the proper perspective. **Jesus asks us to sacrifice now so we can be blessed for eternity, but we're extremely myopic people!**

TO BE LIKE JESUS

Jesus refers to Himself as the "Son of Man." This term refers to the humanity of Jesus for the 33 years He lived like us. **Jesus becoming human showed us how to live, which involves sacrifice for a season.** We also learn from Him that sacrifice leads to eternal salvation and contentment.

"...LET THE DEAD BURY THEIR OWN DEAD."

Another man says he wants to follow Jesus, but he has to wait to get his family affairs in order. More than likely, the man's father wasn't actually dead. This was a stalling tactic often used.

- Don't we do this? **We often say we will get to God when we get everything else how we want it.**

WILLING TO TOUCH UNCLEAN PEOPLE?

- Jesus interacted with groups of people that society deemed "unclean." Who is this in our society and **do we love the most unlovable people?**
- **Do we build relationships with non-believers while still maintaining our biblical integrity?** Do we have the guts to live and teach our faith?

DO WE UNDERSTAND DISCIPLESHIP? / STALLING TACTICS

- To be a disciple of Jesus means that we walk in a similar manner as Him. **Jesus walked sacrificially, knowing that sacrifice yields a great reward.**
- Have we become nearsighted with our faith? **Has our perspective been a worldly one, not an eternal one?** Are we willing to leave it all for His Kingdom?
- We love a Savior but don't like the idea of a Lord. **If we are honest, do we love the blessings of God and the escape of Hell more than the Savior Himself?**
- Is it about what He can do for us? Or, **do we long to live in a way that honors and submits to the Lord no matter the cost in this life?**