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MATTHEW

The Kingdom Displayed – Part 3

Storms and Swine

Matthew 8:23-34

I. Introduction

a. A Humbling Call

- i. You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven
 1. Displaying the Kingdom - Poor in spirit, grieve rightly, meekness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, peacemakers, rejoice when they are persecuted
 2. Your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees
 3. If you hold hatred in your heart, you are guilty of murder – if you entertain lustful thoughts, you have already committed adultery
 4. Love your enemies, bless those who curse you – don't show partiality
 5. Give, pray, and fast without being seen
 6. Store up your treasures in heaven, seek first the Kingdom of God, and don't worry about tomorrow
 7. ***Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect***
- ii. If that is what it means to be a follower of Jesus, a Citizen of Heaven, I fall terribly short
 1. How can any of us ever measure up? Begins to feel like the weight of the law again
 2. Jesus said “take my yoke upon you because my yoke is easy and my burden is light”
 - a. That doesn't sound easy or light

b. There is a huge gap between who we see in the mirror and what Jesus describes

- i. Deep down we know some drastically needs to change
- ii. Change is not easy
 1. They say it takes 30 days to break a habit, but I would add that it takes 30 seconds to pick it back up again
 2. People want to change – change is a multibillion-dollar industry – includes pills, diet plans, workout routines, seminars, self-help books – all promising to make you a better you
 3. The reality is change is hard. Even on a behavioral level, but when we start talking about change on a spiritual level, on a heart level, a desire level – that isn't just hard, it is impossible – for us.
- iii. Matthew 19 Jesus raises the bar on divorce and then a rich young ruler asks “*Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*” Jesus responds ““*Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*”- “*All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?*” - “*If you*

want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” **he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.**

1. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God* – that sounds like a narrow road – narrow is the road and difficult is the way and few go by it
 - a. *When His disciples heard this they were greatly astonished saying, “Who then can be saved?”*
 2. **Mat 19: 26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”**
- c. Change on a heart level is impossible
- i. Impossible apart from the work of Christ
 1. As a disciple of Jesus, a student of Jesus – change at that level isn’t only possible, it is expected
 2. How does He do that? How does He change a man or a woman into His image? Specifically, in the context of anxiety, and distraction, and worry – how do we become more like Jesus?
 3. We have the unique perspective of watching this process in the lives of a rag tag group of fishermen, tax collectors, and zealots
 4. Jesus trains up a group of men and women to carry on His mission of seeking and saving the lost – to be the salt and the light as they are formed into the image of their Savior and King
 5. And because of the unique bird’s eye view that God’s Word gives us of this transformation over their lifetime, we learn how Jesus works in our lives.

Mat 8:23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed 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?”

II. Authentic Faith

- a. Leading up to this, Matthew has grouped a series of miracles and statements made by Jesus that illustrate the difference between authentic faith and false growth
 - i. Man who built His house on the rock and the man who built his house on the sand – other gospels highlight the parable of the seed and the sower
 - ii. One scribe makes the claim they will follow Him wherever He goes - “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”
 - iii. Another man said let me bury my father first – Jesus said “Let the dead bury the dead”
 1. We see the results of almost following Jesus
 - a. If we want to almost follow Jesus – chase after the miracles and the blessings and the security and the comfort you think Jesus provides instead of simply following Jesus for who He is

- b. Or hear His invitation and then say “wait, I’ll catch up to you in a minute. Let me wrap a few things up first. Let me do this one thing I can’t do if I’m following you.”
 - b. After all of this, Jesus turns His attention to His disciples
 - i. Men who had answered the call, men who had left everything and followed Him
 - ii. Just because they had authentic faith doesn’t mean their faith had been perfected
 - 1. When Jesus says “follow me,” He doesn’t take out a measuring cup when we step forward to make sure we have enough faith to be His disciple
 - 2. The only thing that matters is that we step forward – not because we are free of all doubt or we have Jesus figured out but because we trust Him enough to give Him our lives
 - iii. One of the most encouraging passages for me in the gospels is from Mark 9 – a man brings his demon possessed son to Jesus and explains that he had asked the disciples to heal him, but they could not.
 - 1. Jesus says “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring Him to me.”
 - 2. The man brings Jesus His son and says to Jesus “if you can do anything, help us.”
 - 3. “Do you believe I can? All things are possible to him who believes.”
 - a. ***Mark 9:24 (NKJV): 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”***
 - b. Jesus cast the demon out of the boy
- c. I used to believe that obedience was faith in its most mature form
 - i. That is not what we learn throughout scripture
 - ii. Faith begins with action; action is faith in its infancy and without action without a physical response, there is no faith
 - 1. Getting in the boat, bringing his son to Jesus, touching His garment, forsaking all and following Him
 - 2. This wasn’t the pinnacle of their faith – this was the beginning of their faith
 - 3. Their feelings, emotions, their thoughts, their understanding of Jesus – there was immense room for all of that to grow
 - a. But they still stepped forward
 - 4. Jesus will work through our doubts and our fears and our uncertainties – He will cultivate a quiet confidence in Him over time
 - a. But we have to get in the boat

III. Jesus Calms the Storm

- a. The Sea of Galilee is actually a large lake
 - i. 13 miles long (28th Ave to 130th Ave – Dysart), 8 miles wide (Glendale to Union Hills) – prone to dangerous storms because of the weather patterns in that area
 - ii. When we think of the ocean or the lake – we think vacation
 - 1. The beach, a cruise, fishing
 - 2. We relax around water
- b. That hasn’t been the case for most of human history – the sea represented chaos
 - i. The sea was rot with danger and death – it was unpredictable and out of control
 - ii. But it was a necessary danger – fish for food, trade routes, travel, etc.
 - 1. In scripture, the sea is often symbolic of the world
 - a. Jesus tells the disciples, I will make you fishers of men

- b. Jesus also tells a parable about a dragnet that collects all kinds of fish out of the sea and the fisherman separates out the good and the bad
- c. Revelation 13 a beast comes out of the sea representing the nations of mankind – in contrast to the Son of God coming from heaven
- d. Revelation 21 – new heaven and new earth – there is no sea

IV. The Storm

- a. Once they're in the boat a storm hits – chaos, uncertainty
 - i. The disciples, to their credit, run to Jesus
 - 1. Their attitude is all wrong, their question is all wrong, but they know enough to take their concern to Him
 - ii. Listen to their accusation – Do you not care?
 - 1. It was you who said get in the boat and we did! We were just being obedient.
 - 2. Why are you treating us like Jonah? He was disobedient. He deserved the storm!
 - iii. We've all been there right? Lord, I was just doing what you asked.
 - 1. The enemy's two favorite targets – the sovereignty of God and the goodness of God
 - 2. You're suffering, you're hurting – Does God even care? And if He does, can He really do anything about it.
- b. Jesus gets up, speaks to the wind and the sea and says “peace, be still.”
 - i. “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”
 - 1. Is it possible to put our faith in Jesus but not trust Him in the moment? Without a doubt.
 - 2. Is it possible to put our faith in Jesus and at times still think we know better than Him? Just ask Peter.
 - a. The disciples have come to Jesus, they have answered the invitation to follow Him, they are in the boat – they have physically responded in faith
 - b. Their head and their heart still have a lot of room to grow
 - ii. That is a good thing, because the chaos they experienced on the sea won't even compare to the chaos they will experience on land
- c. Here's the encouragement
 - i. ***2 Cor 3: 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.***
 - 1. Being transformed - Metamorphoō - where we get our word metamorphosis – it means to be transfigured – we're not talking about changing our shirt – we are talking about changing our very nature
 - 2. There's a reason we use this word metamorphosis when explaining the change a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly
 - a. It doesn't describe just a change of behaviors or a new set of beliefs – we are talking about a complete transformation
 - b. That is what happens when we trust Jesus enough to go where He is going and do what He is doing – we become more like Him
 - 3. Our responsibility is to keep our eyes on Him

Mat 8:28 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?" 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. 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.

V. Power or Pigs?

- a. We might struggle to see how these events fit into Matthew's narrative
 - i. Tied back to *Mat 7: 28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*
 1. Leper – not only the authority to heal but the authority to declare someone clean
 2. Centurion - Authority to heal at a distance by a word
 - a. Something the centurion understand and was celebrated for
 3. Authority over the wind and the waves
 - ii. This is culmination of this section of Matthew focusing on Jesus' authority
- b. Gergesene
 - i. Limestone cliffs that drop sharply toward the lake, natural and man-made caves in the limestone rock used as tombs
 - ii. For the two demon-possessed men, these tombs provided the perfect location to inhabit – isolated and surrounded by the dead
- c. Presence of the pigs
 - i. They aren't just crossing water; they are crossing a cultural and religious border - predominantly Gentile
 - ii. Pigs were not just food they didn't eat; they were a reminder of pagan occupation
 - iii. So what do we have? - The sea (chaos), the tombs (death), the pigs (unclean), and the demons (evil power) – what a day for the disciples
 1. The storm itself could very possibly have been spiritual opposition
 2. It wasn't your garden variety storm – the word used is tempest – seismos – earthquake – the disciples had been through storms – this wasn't that
 3. Mark points out "Jesus "rebukes" the wind and says to the sea, "Be still!" – the same exact word Jesus uses in Mark to command the demon to leave these men
 4. Be still – means "be muzzled"
- d. Faith – authentic, false, little – now resisted (belief without submission) and rejected
 - i. Even when Jesus displays His authority for the good of others, many would rather keep their pigs and send Jesus away
 1. Not an issue of Jesus' power but people's trust affection
 - ii. Proximity to miracles doesn't guarantee faith. Some people would rather live in the kingdom of man (with all its chaos) than accept the good King and His Kingdom