

07. Matthew 8:1 - 9:35



The call of Matthew Caravaggio. Public Domain

The coming of God's kingdom

The healing and liberating power of Jesus' word

Matthew 8:1 - 9:35

1. A leper is cleansed Matthew 8:1-4 (Mark 1:40-45)

When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him.

And behold, a leper approached, fell down before him, and said,

“Lord [κύριε], if you will, you can make me clean.”

Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said,

“Of course I want to. Be clean! And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Jesus says to him, “See that you tell no one, but go,

show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifice

that Moses commanded, for a witness to them.” (see Leviticus 14)

Note: Matthew tends to abbreviate to focus on Jesus' words

‘Miracle’

If our image of God is of an all-powerful Being who creates and sustains in being ourselves and everything we experience, and who controls everything, it follows that God can do anything God wants, including suspend what we are accustomed to speak of as the ‘laws of nature’. A God like this can intervene at will. In this understanding, a miracle is such an act of intervention.

The basic meaning of the word ‘God’ is ‘the One calling’, or ‘the One called.’ If we watch Jesus closely and listen to him as he shares his image of God, we see that ‘God’ refers to a mysterious, sustaining, and loving Presence. This Presence is constant, and constantly loving (self-giving). What happens in our world results not from an intervention of a constant, ever present, loving God, but from how, and to what degree, we welcome this Love.

In this understanding miracles are all around us. We should not be surprised at what happens when someone is open to God, as loving, as Jesus attracts people to share his faith in God, a profound healing of mind and heart takes place. This can affect the body as well. As Jesus frequently says: 'Your faith has made you whole' (Matthew 9:22, 29).

In this and the following slide I am drawing on the words of Paul Compton.

In understanding miracles in this way, we also need to reflect that a fundamental hallmark of God's ongoing gift of creation is the intelligibility of creation. We ask why, and expect to find cause and effect we expect to find scientific models to explain what is happening in creation. Our models are always incomplete, but we are deeply confident of the fundamental intelligibility of God's ongoing loving gift of creating us to be what we are and what we can become. It is our longing for communion with God that is the mainspring of this desire to know.

A 'miracle' isn't something happening outside God's on-going gift of creation. It isn't an intrinsically unintelligible extra due to God's intervention. Rather a 'miracle' alerts us to the limits of our knowledge. It can humble us and open our minds and hearts to the presence of God in our lives, not as an intervening power, but as a constant, loving presence, drawing the whole of creation into divine communion. It can alert us to be more open to the Presence and communion for which we long, to the grace that is always there for us. . As Pope Francis puts it (on the occasion of the unveiling of a bust of Benedict XVI in the Vatican Gardens on Oct. 27, 2014). "God is not a demiurge or a magician, but the creator who gives being to all things"

Cardinal Walter Kasper writes: 'Whenever something new arises, whenever life is awakened and reality reaches ecstatically beyond itself, in all seeking and striving, in every ferment and birth, and even more in the beauty of creation, something of the being and activity of God's Spirit is manifested' (*The God of Jesus Christ*, 227).

Jesus revealed God as self-giving love. Creation is an explosion of this self-giving. We become what we are called to be to the extent that we love, to the extent that we 'participate in the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4).

Denis Edwards writes: 'God gives to creatures themselves the capacity for the new. Because of God's creative and redeeming presence to creatures, they can become something they were not. When matter comes to life on earth, when life becomes self-conscious and personal, this occurs through God enabling creation to transcend itself and become something new. Above all when one of us in the human and creaturely community, Jesus of Nazareth, is so radically open to God, so one with God, that we rightly see him as God-with-us, then we can say that in this person creation transcends itself into God' (*How God Acts*, 158).



Jesus was fully open to God's Spirit, God's creative action. John assures us: 'He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure' (John 3:34). Jesus loved perfectly.

'Miracles' show what can happen when perfect love is welcomed in 'faith'.

'If it is through the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then know that the kingdom of God has overtaken you' (Matthew 12:28).

2. Matthew 8:5-10 (Luke 7:1-9)

When he entered Capharnaum, a centurion approached him, and asked “**Lord**, my son [παῖς] is lying at home lame, being horribly distressed.” He says to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” But the centurion answered and said, “**Lord**, I am not good enough to have you come under my roof; simply say it with a word, and my child will be healed. I also am a man under authority, and I have soldiers under me. I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard that he marvelled and said to those who were following him, “Amen, I tell you: I have not found such a great **faith** from anyone in Israel.

Matthew 8:11-13 (Luke 13:28-29)

I say to you: Many will come from east and west and will lie at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth.” Jesus said to the centurion, “Go, it will be for you just as you have believed.” And the son was healed in that hour.

3. Matthew 8:14-15 (Mark 1:29-31)

‘When Jesus came into Peter’s house,
he saw his mother-in-law lying there with a fever.
And he touched her hand, and the fever left her,
and she got up and served [διηκόνει] him.’

Interlude 1

Who is Jesus? What does it mean to follow him?

1. Jesus, the Suffering Servant of the Lord

Matthew 8:16-17 (Mark 1:32-34)

‘That evening they brought to him many who were possessed by demons [δαιμον],
and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick,

so that what was said through the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled:

“He has taken away our weaknesses and carried away the diseases.” (Isaiah 53:4)

2. Jesus, the Son of Man :

Matthew 8:18-22 (Luke 9:57-60)

But when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other shore. (compare Mark 4:35)

A scribe, came up and said to him,

“Master, I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus says to him:

“The foxes have caves, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the **Son of Man** does not have anywhere to lay his head.”

(Daniel 7:13-14)

But another, one of the disciples, said to him,

“Lord, allow me first to go away and to bury my father.”

But Jesus says to him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.”

Back to the miracles

4. Jesus victory over chaos : Matthew 8:23-27 (Mark 4:36-41)

When he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.
And behold, there was a great storm [σεισμὸς] on the sea,
so that the boat was swamped by the waves;
but he slept. Then they came to him, awakened him,
and said, “**Lord**, save! We are sinking!”
And he says to them, “How fearful you are, *you of little faith!*”
Then he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea.
And there was a great calm.
But the people were astonished and they said,
“What kind of person is this that the winds and the sea obey him?”

‘You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.’
(Psalm 89:9).

‘Nothing in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Romans 8:39).

‘God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam’ (Psalm 46:1-3).

Jonah 2:2-9

“I called to the LORD out of my distress, and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;

all your waves and your billows passed over me.

Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight;

how shall I look again upon your holy temple?’

The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me;

weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever;

As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the LORD;

and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple ...

Deliverance belongs to the LORD!”

5. Jesus calms two deranged men Matthew 8:28 - 9:1 (Mark 5:1-21)

When he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs coming out of the tombs met him. They were so fierce that no one could pass that way. Suddenly they shouted, “What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?”

Now a large herd of swine was feeding at some distance from them. The demons begged him, “If you cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.” And he said to them, “Go!” So they came out and entered the swine; and suddenly, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water.

The swineherds ran off, and on going into the town, they told the whole story about what had happened to the demoniacs. Then the whole town came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighbourhood. And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town.

6. Jesus liberates from paralysing sin Matthew 9:2-8 (Mark 2:2-12)

Just then some people were carrying a paralysed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, “Take heart, son; **your sins are forgiven.**” Then some of the **scribes** said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’?”

But so that you may know that the **Son of Man** (eschatological judge) has power on earth to forgive sins” – he then said to the paralysed man – “Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.” And he stood up and went to his home.

When the **crowds** saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given people such power.

(Matthew 1:21; 16:19; 18:18; 26:18; 28:18)

Interlude 2

Who is Jesus? What does it mean to follow him?

1. Jesus, the Physician: Matthew & his friends Matthew 9:9-13 (Mark 2:13-17)

As Jesus was going on from there he saw a man named **Matthew** (see 10:3) sitting at the custom house and says to him, “**Follow me.**” And he got up and followed him.



Caravaggio : the call of Matthew

And it happened that he was reclining at the table in the house, and behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and reclined at the table with Jesus and his **disciples**. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, “Why does your **teacher** eat with the tax collectors and sinners?” But he heard it and said, “It is not the healthy who need the physician but the sick! *But go and learn what it means: ‘Mercy is what I want, and not sacrifice!’* For I came not to call the righteous but sinners!” (Hosea 6:6; repeated in Matthew 12:7)

Who is Jesus? What does it mean to follow him?

2. Jesus, the Bridegroom Matthew 9:14-17 (Mark 2:18-22)

Then the disciples of John come to him and say, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? Days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

No one puts a patch of unshrunk material on an old garment, for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. And they do not put young wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins are burst, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are destroyed. They put young wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Back to Miracles

7-8. The daughter of the synagogue official

and the woman with a haemorrhage : Matthew 9:18-26 (Mark 5:21-43)

While he was saying this to them, behold, one of the rulers came, fell down before him, and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” Then Jesus stood up and followed him with his disciples. And behold, a woman who had been haemorrhaging for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassels of his garment. For she said to herself, “If I just touch his garment, I am **saved!**” Jesus turned around, saw her, and said, “Take courage, daughter, **your faith has saved you!**” And the woman was saved from that hour. When Jesus came to the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, he said, “Go away. The girl has not died; she is sleeping.” And they laughed at him. When the crowd had been sent out, he went in, took her by the hand, and the girl **got up**. *And this report went throughout that entire land.*

9. Two blind men : Matthew 9:27-31 (Only in Matthew)

As Jesus was going on from there **two** (see 8:28) **blind men followed** him crying out and saying, “Have mercy on us, **Son of David.**” When he came into the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus says to them, “Do you believe that I can do that?” They say to him, “Yes, **Lord.**” Then he touched their eyes and said, “Let it happen to you according to your **faith.**” Their eyes were opened. And Jesus admonished them and said, “See that no one knows it.” But they went out and spread the news about him in that entire region.

10. Jesus gives speech to the dumb man : Matthew 9:32-34 (only)

When they went out, behold, they brought him a dumb man who was demon-possessed. When the demon was cast out, the dumb man began to speak. And the crowds were amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel!”

The Pharisees said, “By the ruler of demons he casts out the demons.”

(see Mark 3:22)

Conclusion Matthew 9:35

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages,
teaching in their synagogues,
and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom,
and curing every disease and every sickness.

Matthew uses a very similar summary just before his first discourse
(see 4:23).

‘Jesus went throughout Galilee,
teaching in their synagogues
and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom
and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.’