

Matthew 8:1-34 | “The Authority of Jesus, Part 1”
Preached on July 16, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 8 this morning. *[pause]*

I'll be covering Matthew 8 in two parts.

The first part will be this week, focusing on Jesus' miracles and what His miracles show us.

But next week will be part two, which tackles another theme in this chapter, which is faith and commitment to Christ.

So for today, we will be going rather swiftly through 5 miracles of Jesus, but each miracle will re-emphasize the same thing: *the authority and power of Jesus*. *[pauseeee]*

What's interesting about us as humans is that while we try to act independent and like we are big stuff - with great regularity, life shows us that we are dependent and weak.

And I'd suggest that we all inherently know deep down that we are dependent and weak. *[pause]*

Let me give you a couple examples...

We think we are very smart with all of our scientific and medical knowledge and progress.

I mean, just look at all of the advances we have made in medicine! *[pause]*

We have created ways to ease pain, prevent some diseases from affecting us, and are getting better and better at surgery.

Yet amidst all of those advancements, we can't even prevent the common cold. *[pause]*

Amidst all of that knowledge and progress, we can't stop viruses from doing what they do.

People still die all the time from sickness, disease, and other ailments that we can't stop from being lethal.

We may prolong death, but death still comes. *[pause]*

Let me give you another example...

We have gained great knowledge in regards to the weather.

We have radar and meteorologists, who can predict the weather, and find out if a hurricane is coming and they can even estimate how bad it will be.

But we can't change or stop the weather from happening. *[pause]*

If a tornado is coming at you, all you can do is run or take shelter.

We may predict the weather better, but we can't change it. *[pause]*

You see, for all of our boasts of independence, knowledge, and power, the world around us constantly pushes it in our face that we are actually very weak and powerless. *[pauseeeee]*

We are sort of like that emperor in the story of the emperor with no clothes.

We boast like we have something great, when in reality, we have nothing. *[pauseeeee]*

The hope for humanity cannot be found in us, like many people think.

But we must look outside of ourselves to Someone who has all authority and power, and what we will see this morning is that that person is none other than Jesus Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Here in the book of Matthew, Jesus just finished the Sermon on the Mount, where He taught the people with authority.

Well now Jesus will *show* His authority through various miracles. *[pause]*

Aren't you easily frustrated with people who are all talk and no action?

They talk big, but in reality, they can't do much.

It's like the sports fan, who knows exactly what the coach or player should have done, yet there they are sitting on their couch eating Doritos.

Thankfully, Jesus is not like that.

He teaches with authority and acts with authority because He *has* all authority. *[pauseeee]*

As you work through Matthew 8, what you find is that Jesus' authority is demonstrated over different realms.

And the first one you come upon is that you see...

I. Jesus' authority over physical illnesses (1-17)

In verses 1-17, there are 3 different healing miracles detailed, so let's READ about those. *[READ VERSES 1-17]*

Now we can't get into every little detail of these stories, and actually, we will be revisiting these stories next week.

But for today, let's understand what happens in each, and what they all teach us about Christ. *[pause]*

The first miracle, covered in verses 1-4, is the healing of the leper. *[pause]*

A leper approaches him and requests to be healed.

Jesus stretches out his hand and touches him, which would be shocking in that day, for if you touched a leper, you would be considered unclean.

Yet Jesus does this and says, “I will; be clean.”

And we are told that *immediately* his leprosy was cleansed. *[pause]*

Just think about that word “immediately”.

With a touch and a couple words, Jesus immediately heals this man of a disease that affected his whole life.

Now he could go to the priest, who could affirm that all the leprosy was gone. *[pause]*

So many years of suffering and being a social outcast were overturned in a moment.

What he and no one else could ever do was done by Jesus in an instant. *[pauseeee]*

There aren't many things that we can do immediately, let alone heal leprosy.

Yet to Jesus, leprosy is no obstacle or hard thing.

It's no challenge to the Lord -- healing to Him was as simple as speaking. *[pause]*

You think the One who created the world with His words can't immediately heal leprosy with words?

Talk about authority and power! *[pauseeee]*

The next healing miracle is found in verses 5-13.

A centurion comes to Jesus and tells him about how his servant is paralyzed and suffering at home.

So Jesus tells him that He will go and heal him, but interestingly, the centurion tells Him that he's not worthy for Jesus to go into his house.

But instead, Jesus should just say the word, and the healing will happen.

So Jesus says, “‘Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.’ And the servant was healed at that very moment.” *[pause]*

We will get more into the centurion's faith next week, but today, just think about the fact that Jesus did this healing without even going to the person who needed to be healed.

He healed from afar off with words!

Talk about authority and power! *[pauseeee]*

It's not like Jesus was limited to being in the presence of the person needing to be healed to heal someone, but He could do it miles and miles away.

Can you do that? [pause]

We can't even lift up a napkin with our words, let alone heal someone with paralysis who is far away!

Just think about this and marvel - that's our Lord! [pauseeee]

The third miracle is found in verses 14-15, and it's Peter's mother-in-law. *[pause]*

She has a fever, he touches her hand, and the fever leaves her.

And what's amazing about this healing is that right after the fever leaves her, she gets up and begins to serve Jesus! *[pauseeeee]*

Right after our fever breaks, we are still somewhat weak and worn down, but Peter's mother-in-law gets up and gets to work.

Jesus' power is unparalleled. *[pause]*

In verses 16-17, we find that that evening Jesus casts out demons out of people, and heals everyone brought to Him.

Truly, "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

He is the promised Messiah, and He's proving it. [pauseeee]

When you take these healing miracles together, they show us a couple things.

First, they point us to how Jesus can heal easily.

In each, Jesus effortlessly and immediately heals someone. *[pause]*

When you read these stories, you aren't left with thinking, "Wow, that was really tough for Jesus to do, but He did it."

It's not like he's a rock climber, who gruelingly accomplished the seemingly impossible.

Rather, you are left with the thought of, "Wow, each one was so easy for Jesus to do! He even healed someone without even being near them!" [pause]

And it's not like the healing even took time, but "immediately" and "that very moment" the healing was accomplished, so much so that Peter's mother-in-law can get up and serve.

Jesus' authoritative power was on display by how easily He healed. [pauseeeee]

Something else that comes out as you think about these healings is how Jesus can heal *anything*.

In just 17 verses, Jesus heals leprosy, paralysis, a fever, and all who were sick. *[pause]*

There was not a certain sickness or disease that stumped Him.

It's not like He was like, "Um, I don't know about this one. Sorry, I don't do those kinds of illnesses." *[pause]*

He was not a specialist in medicine, only dealing with one kind of physical ailment.

I wouldn't even call him someone in general practice, for He is the great Healer of *anything*. *[pause]*

It's not like he could only heal colds and back pain, but He healed all who were sick. *[pause]*

Leprosy, no problem.

Paralysis, made well.

A fever? That's nothing to him.

Nothing is too great for Him! *[pauseeee]*

Something else that comes out as you think about these healings is how Jesus can heal *anyone*.

In the first healing, He healed a social outcast.

In the second healing, He healed a Gentile's servant.

And in the third healing, He heals a close family member of one of His disciples.

And then He heals all who were sick -- that covers basically every group, doesn't it? *[pause]*

His healing of all types of people points to His saving work, which is available to all people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

He doesn't put up barriers to who can go to Him, but tears down the societal barriers that divide us. *[pause]*

All can go to Him to find healing from their sin problem!

If you are a social outcast, His arms are stretched out to you.

If you are a Gentile, there's a seat at the table reserved for you, if you place your faith in Him.

Go to Him in your need, and look to Him for forgiveness and life, and He will bring healing and restoration to your relationship with the Father. *[pauseeee]*

What great power and authority of Christ!

He has authority over physical illnesses.

He can heal, do you trust that? *[pause]*

Now He doesn't always heal right away or in this lifetime, for He has a purpose in everything, just like how He didn't go to heal Lazarus right away.

But eventually, all those who trust in Him will be healed someday in Heaven, and He brings spiritual healing to those who trust in Him. *[pause]*

So our correct posture is simply like the leper, "Lord, *if you will*, you can make me clean."

Lay your ailments at His feet, lay the sicknesses of your friends and family members at His feet, and kneel down before Him.

Know that He can heal, but trust His will, knowing that whatever happens, He is in control.

And look to the more eternally important healing that He brings in our hearts because of His work on the Cross. *[pauseeee]*

As you move on in the text, we find another realm that Jesus has authority over and what you see is...

II. Jesus' authority over the natural world (23-27)

Don't worry, we will cover verses 18-22 next week, but let's go on to verses 23-27. *[READ]*

Jesus and His disciples are out in a boat, and a great storm comes.

It's so bad that the boat is being "swamped" by waves, but there is Jesus asleep. *[pause]*

Now the boat that they were in is not like the boats we are often used to.

It's not like he could go down into a nice ship and sleep in the bed, rather, they often used smaller, open fishing boats.

So it's amazing that Jesus could even sleep through such a storm when the winds and the waves were all blowing and splashing all around.

But there He is, sleeping, which demonstrates that He's not fearful at all. *[paueese]*

Have you ever noticed that you can't sleep when you are extremely anxious or fearful?

If you knew that a tornado was heading towards your house, you wouldn't be able to sleep.

This is because inherent to sleep is a sort of trusting disposition because you aren't going to be awake and alert to the dangers around you. *[pause]*

So here is Jesus sleeping in a storm, and it just points to His powerful control - even in a seemingly dangerous event, He was so in control that He could sleep through it. *[pause]*

The disciples should have taken their cues from their Master, but instead, they are fearful, wake him up, and tell Him to save them. *[pause]*

This storm must have been really bad because some of the disciples were experienced fishermen, yet they think they are going to die.

But what does Jesus do once awakened?

Get this: instead of immediately panicking at the sight of the storm, and quickly stilling it, what does He do?

He calmly says, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” *[pause]*

He was so in control, and so unafraid, that He could talk to the disciples before ever doing anything about the storm! *[pauseeee]*

His calmness and fearlessness is astounding, but that’s not the most astounding thing about this story.

It’s more astounding that He actually calms a storm! *[pauseeee]*

Notice what the text tells us, for it signifies something important.

Jesus gets up, and we are told that he “rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.” *[pause]*

He actually “rebuked” the storm!

He has such authority that He can actually rebuke a storm, and the storm *obeys* Him!

Could a storm obey your word? Of course not, it would plow right through your word and keep going. *[pause]*

Even storms are no match for Christ!

He easily and authoritatively stills a raging storm in an instant.

The sea went from a “great storm” to “great calm” in a moment. *[pause]*

It was so easy for Him, and he didn’t just calm the storm down a little bit, but there was “great calm”!

This sea went from hurricane-like weather to so calm that everything got quiet and still in a second. *[pause]*

No wonder the disciples “marveled” and said, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” *[pause]*

They recognized that Jesus was no mere human, but something more, for only God had the power to do such things.

Listen to Psalm 89:8-9...

“O Lord God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O Lord, with your faithfulness all around you? You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.” *[pause]*

And Jesus’ rebuking of the sea reflects what God did at the Red Sea, for Psalm 106:9 says, “He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry...” *[pause]*

This Jesus is none other than the Lord Himself in flesh.

He has all power and authority over even the natural world. *[pauseeee]*

We are at the mercy of the world’s severe storms, as we can only prepare for them to hit or move out of the way.

Just flip on the news, and you see evidence for this streamed across the headlines.

But Christ is never at the mercy of the world’s natural disasters, but He has control over them.

And if a storm is effortlessly stilled by Him, then what could He not do? *[pause]*

Jesus has power over sicknesses and storms.

That right there would be enough proof for many of us, but here’s the thing, it doesn’t stop there.

Yes, He has power over things in this natural world, like sicknesses and storms, but we also find that His power and authority extends even beyond what we can see to the spiritual world.

And so thirdly, we see...

III. Jesus’ authority over the spiritual world (16, 28-34)

In verse 16, we saw a snippet of Jesus’ power over the spiritual world, as he cast out demons with a word.

But now in verses 28-34, we will see His power over the spiritual world on full display.

I’ll READ it. *[READ VERSES 28-34]*

When Jesus and His disciples make land, they come upon two demon-possessed men, who are so fierce that no one can pass. *[pause]*

This must have been a crazy sight to behold, for just imagine how dangerous and violent they must have been so that people couldn't get past them.

But notice the first thing that happens...

The demons say to Jesus, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" *[pause]*

The demons quickly realized who Jesus was and even called him the Son of God. *[pause]*

Isn't it interesting that even Satan and his demons know that God exists and that Jesus is the Son of God?

Yet there are many people in our day, who don't admit that basic truth. *[pauseeee]*

You can tell that the demons are terrified of Jesus, for He will someday send them to eternal torment.¹

But they were wondering why they were seeing Him now, for it wasn't the appointed time.

So did He come early to torment them before the final torment? *[pauseeeee]*

Did you notice something?

The demons know that their end is sure!

They know that someday they will lose and face eternal fire forever, and they know that Christ is more powerful and will take care of them, yet they still rebel.

So in their fear, instead of facing torment, they desire to be sent into a herd of pigs. *[pause]*

They understood that as they stood before Jesus, the One with utmost power and authority, all they could do is beg for leniency. *[pause]*

Isn't this such a spectacular story?

People think demons are so powerful, yet here they are acknowledging who Jesus is, frightened of Him, and begging to be sent into pigs.

And Jesus answers with a word, "Go," and they leave the demon-possessed men instantaneously. *[pause]*

Sounds a lot like the healings we saw earlier and the stilling of the storm, right?

Easily and immediately Jesus does what no one else can do. *[pause]*

So the demons enter this herd of pigs, who then rush into the sea and drown. *[pause]*

¹ See Matthew 25:41.

This drowning of the pigs may picture the fear of the demons and their eventual destruction, but either way, it is dramatic proof that Jesus has performed a miracle.

And sadly it's fear that leads the herdsmen to flee and tell everyone in the town, who in fear, beg Jesus to leave. *[pause]*

Why would the people ask Jesus Christ, the One who just miraculously cast out the demons who were oppressing these men, to leave?

Didn't they see who He was? Didn't they see His great and marvelous authority and power?

Did they care more about pigs and property than people? *[pause]*

In fear, they pushed Christ away, instead of bowing the knee in worship.

They only saw His raw power and considered Him not safe, but if only they looked deeper to see what His raw power showed about who He truly was. *[pauseeee]*

The townspeople's response to Jesus reminds us that this chapter confronts each of us with the question, "How will you respond to Jesus' power and authority?"

Will you push Him away in fear like the townspeople?

Will you not trust Him like the disciples in the boat?

Or will be like the leper and the centurion, who recognized Christ's authority, and trusted that He could do anything?

Jesus' authority is all-encompassing!

He has power over physical illnesses, the natural world, and the spiritual world.

Nothing is outside of His power and authority! *[pause]*

That is a matter of fact, you can't avoid that truth, so now the question remains, "How will you respond to Jesus' power and authority?" *[pauseeeee]*

I'll share two ways to respond to Him...

First, *trust Him and don't fear.*

Why would we fear when we truly believe who Jesus is and what He can do?

He can heal anything, He can still a storm, and He can cast out demons with a word - why fear anything that comes our way? *[pause]*

Think about the things that you have been anxious and fearful about recently.

Are they too hard for the Sovereign Lord?

Have you been having little faith, or have you been marveling at the One who rebuked a storm and it obeyed?

Rest in Him, He isn't lacking!

He is in control and can handle anything, so rely upon His sovereign power and will in all things.
[pause]

Secondly, in light of Jesus' authority and power, *go to Him in worship and praise.*

Marvel at who He is, what He has done, and can do.

He deserves all praise and worship! *[pause]*

The One with such power over pain, went to the Cross and painfully died for us.

The One with such power over the natural world, came to this world, and lived in this sin-cursed world for us.

The One with such power over Satan, looked like He was defeated by Satan as He hung on the Cross, but by the Cross defeated Satan, and then rose from the grave.

Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! *[pauseeee]*

If you haven't trusted in Him for salvation, then trust Him, who can easily and instantaneously give you forgiveness and life because of what He did.

He has the power to break your bondage to sin and death. *[pause]*

And for us who believe, let's keep remembering *Who* we follow...

None other than the One who heals, the One who calms the storm, the One who casts out demons, and the One who gave His life for us, and then rose victorious from the grave.

All other things and people will let you down, but Christ is worthy of all trust and worship.