

Matthew Ch.8

Faith, the distraction of miracles: and the human ability to always miss the point.

Regardless of how intelligent, talented, gifted, benevolent you may be, your efforts are a waste of precious time if you do not love as God loves (I Cor. 13). In petty desire, unredeemed humanity seeks ego comforts such as happiness, wealth, and power, and sacrifices true joy to possess them. The desires of immature Christians can be likewise ego fulfilling, and thereby miss God's passion for us. The primal faith which God most honors is humble and trusting, seeks no self glorification, and acts out of authentic love.

After the Sermon on the Mount

- **The first miracles.** *Though Matthew's account doesn't record the earliest known miracle, turning water into wine, he devotes this passage to the early public miracles of Jesus, and the human response to them. There was a knowledge of the person and capacity of Jesus by those he encountered, although their knowledge is primitive. Still, we see primal faith along with the volitional power of Jesus to both heal and control nature.*
 - **Healing the leper, 8:1-5**
 - *Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.*
 - **The Centurion's servant, 8:6-13**
 - *Just say the word.* Implied trust in the authority of Jesus.
 - **Peter's mother-in-law, 8:14-15**
 - A volitional act of compassion that restored her health and simple dignity as hostess of her household.
 - **Receiving the demon possessed and ill for healing, 8:16-17**
 - Calming the storm, 8:23-27.
 - **The Gadarene demoniac(s), 8:28-34.** Also found in Mk. 5:1-37, Luke 8:26-37.

Distractions: what were the crowds seeking and what was Jesus offering?

The Crowds

- Heal me now, fix me now, feed me now. _____
- But we may or may not listen to you. _____

The Pharisees (Yes, they were there).

- The magic show. _____
- But we want to make sure he doesn't break the rules. _____

The Disciples

- We're not sure yet, but we're hoping for some of the power and fame. _____

The Distraction of Demons. "Demon-possessed". It is primarily in the Gospel accounts that we see scripture address "demons," also assumed to be fallen angels. Beyond this, and one or two other instances, we have little reliable information regarding them.

- Yet the lore of demonology has developed a massive library of anecdotal information.
- Far too many believe the influence of pop media, movies, and novels depicting the devil and demons. _____

So, what was the purpose of Jesus actions in this chapter?

- His stated desire was to bring the kingdom of Heaven to fulfillment. _____
- But His actions, healing and miracles were a natural extension of His nature. _____
- His miracles were demonstrations of His power over health and healing, but volitional power over nature. _____

The goal: qualifying true discipleship, 8:18-22.

- The scribe who wanted to follow Jesus. _____
Are you willing to give up your worldly comfort and risk rejection from those you love? _____
- The disciple who wished to attend to his family's needs first.
Follow Me and allow the "dead" to bury their own dead.

*There are many more miracles to appear, and the human response is usually confused or selfish. Some want more of the magic show while others want the power, precious few seek the gift of healing and restoration with sincere hearts, and fewer still wish to be real disciples. **The point is not personal empowerment, that's what the world seeks in its religiosity. The real truth is that miracles are the sole property of God. We humans are merely one of many vehicles for them.***