

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW
Lesson 6 – Study Questions
Matthew 8:14-34; 9:1-31

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE

Read Matthew 8:14-22

1. We begin today with the third miracle story of this section, the Cure of Peter's Mother-in-Law. Read verses 14-15 and explain why one of the following questions is significant to you (see the Commentary, pages 51-52).

What is important about this woman?

How did Jesus heal her?

What happened after the healing?

NOTE: In verses 16-17, Jesus fulfills this role by his physical healings: Isaiah foretold of a Servant figure who would take Israel's sins upon himself and heal God's people. This Servant would inaugurate the restoration of the tribes of Israel and bring the Gentiles to the family of God. Matthew sees Jesus in this role. *Navarre*

2. As the crowd grew, Jesus gave orders to withdraw across the Sea of Galilee. Before they departed, a scribe told Jesus he wanted to follow him. Jesus discouraged him saying, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head" (verses 18-20). Give an example of the kind of sacrifice made by those who have committed their lives to spreading the Gospel.

NOTE: Use of the title Son of Man in the gospel; this enigmatic expression is found only on the lips of Jesus when he speaks of his earthly ministry...; he may use this to refer to himself simply as a human being. *Agape*

3. When another follower said to Jesus, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father," Jesus answered, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead." (verses 21-22) What do you think this means?

NOTE: In verse 22 the demand of Jesus overrides what both the Jewish and Hellenistic world regarded as filial obligation of the highest importance. *NABRE*

4. We have extensive Christian funeral traditions today. Have you ever missed the funeral of someone you loved? How did that make you feel?

5. CONNECTION: In our readings today, Jesus discouraged two potential disciples warning that following him will not be easy and may be at odds with their worldly desires. We are all called to be disciples of Jesus, but it is much harder to imitate Christ in the face of our day to day struggles. What's the hardest thing you have had to do as a disciple of Jesus? Share how you have responded to the challenges of building up his kingdom on earth no matter the cost to you.

Read and record Luke 9:23 and pray today for the strength you need to be a faithful disciple of Christ.

DAY TWO

Read Matthew 8:23-27

6. Next, Jesus got into a boat with his disciples to cross the sea (verse 23). When a violent storm arose, the boat was swamped by waves. Describe the reactions of the disciples and Jesus from verses 24-25.

Disciples

Jesus

THINK: Jesus' stilling of the storm parallels the experience of Jonah in the Old Testament (see Jonah 1:1-16).

7. Jesus called the disciples men of "little faith" (verse 26). What does it mean that they had a little faith? Share an example of what a little faith or a big faith looks like to you.

8. "Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm" (verse 26). Record one of the following bible verses about God's power over the waters and storms.

Psalm 107:28-30

Isaiah 43:2

Revelation 22:1

9. Jesus acted immediately to rescue the disciples and they wondered about the man "whom even the winds and the sea obey" (verse 27). Has God ever immediately answered one of your prayers? If so, how is that awe at his power still evident in your life today? If not, how would you feel if you had this experience?

10. CONNECTION: When a sudden violent storm created fear for their very lives among the disciples, they woke Jesus, and the sea became "a great calm." It is certain that we will face physical and emotional storms in our lives. When our prayers are not immediately answered, we may feel that Jesus is asleep and does not care, and anxiety and doubt may creep into our faith. How do you know for sure that the Lord does care and will keep you safe before fear and panic set in? Share some thoughts with your group.

In Psalm 121, verses 4 and 8, the psalmist assures us, "Behold, the guardian of Israel never slumbers or sleeps. The LORD will guard your coming and going both now and forever." Write a prayer today for a great calm for something troubling you or a loved one.

DAY THREE

Read Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1-8

11. Jesus and his disciples then crossed to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and traveled to an area near the town of Gadara. There, Jesus healed two men possessed by demons that caused them to harm others and themselves (verses 28-34). (See the Commentary, page 54, and also Mark 5:1-20). Thinking of demons as the presence of evil in our lives, give an example of the harm "demons" cause to ourselves and others.

NOTE: Jesus has power over demons. He will communicate this same power of exorcism to his apostles along with the power to forgive sins and to heal the sick (Mt 18:18) (Acts 10:38). *Agape*

12. As chapter 9 begins, Jesus crossed the sea to return to Capernaum and some people brought him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw the faith of the people, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven" (verses 1-2). Jesus answered their request first with spiritual, not physical healing. What does this tell you about how our prayers are answered?

NOTE: Matthew omits the graphic details of what the friends did in order to get the paralytic in contact with Jesus (see Mark 2:3-4). *Sacra Pagina*

13. What have you experienced in the Sacrament of Reconciliation when the priest says, "Your sins are forgiven, go in peace"?

NOTE: [Jesus knew that some scribes thought the forgiveness of sins was blasphemy (verses 3-6).] Scribes were Jewish leaders and experts in the Mosaic Law. The episode marks the beginning of a growing resistance to Jesus, which culminates in his death. *Ignatius Study Bible*

14. What was the response of the crowd when Jesus said to the paralytic, "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home," and he did so (verses 6-8)?

15. CONNECTION: Today we read how his companions brought the paralytic to Jesus on a stretcher. "When Jesus saw their faith," he healed him and his friends were struck with awe and glorified God. As a faith community, we too pray for healing for our members. When have you seen the powerful prayers of a faith community bring healing, though it may not be in the manner you expected?

Read and record James 5:16 and pray today for the members of your faith community that are in need of God's grace.

DAY FOUR **Read Matthew 9:9-17**

16. Next, Jesus saw a man named Matthew collecting taxes and said to him, "Follow me" (verse 9). Read the Commentary, pages 55-56, and record a few reasons why the selection of a tax collector was surprising to the Jewish people.

17. Later, the Pharisees saw Jesus and his disciples eating a meal and said to the disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (verses 10-11) Select one of Jesus' responses from verses 12-13 below and comment on how it reflected his mission.

Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.

Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'

I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.

18. Then, the disciples of John approached Jesus and asked why his disciples did not fast as was their tradition. Jesus replied using three metaphors about a bridegroom, an old cloak and old wineskins (verses 14-17). Select one of these metaphors and comment on what it means and how it might apply to your spiritual life.

19. There are some traditions of fasting in our faith. If fasting is part of your faith practice, describe what it means to you and how it enhances your faith.

20. CONNECTION: Today we read about the call of Matthew to become an Apostle and later, an Evangelist. Jesus called Matthew by name and he immediately abandoned his life and career to follow Jesus. If Jesus called you by name to follow him, what would be the hardest thing to leave behind in your life? Would you be able to do it?

Read and record a phrase from 2 Timothy 1:7-8 and let this thought lead you into prayer today.

DAY FIVE

Read Matthew 9:18-31

NOTE: Here we have two healing stories told within one story. The linking of the stories is significant. See also St. Mark's more detailed version of the story 5:21-43 that includes additional details that reveal the significance of the story and its relationship to the nation of Israel. In Mark's account, the girl raised from the dead was 12 years old and the name of her father was Jairus.
Agape

21. As Jesus finished speaking, a synagogue official, whose daughter had just died, knelt before him and asked him to "come, lay your hand on her, and she will live." Jesus and his disciples followed him when a woman, suffering hemorrhages for twelve years, came up behind him hoping for a cure (verses 18-20). Describe what happened between them below from verses 21-22 .

What did the woman do?

What did Jesus do?

NOTE: For 12 years she had been ritually unclean. Anything on which she sat or laid became unclean and anyone who touched her or her bed or garments became unclean. Continuing in this state of ritual impurity, she could not attend her synagogue or Temple worship. *Agape*

22. When Jesus arrived at the official's house, he said, "The girl is not dead but sleeping." Then, he took her by the hand and she arose (verses 23-26). Consider the similarity between the healings of the little girl and the suffering woman from verses 20-22 (see also the Commentary, page 58). Comment on why that might be important.

23. As Jesus continued his journey, he was followed by two blind men asking to be healed. Jesus asked them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" He touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith" (verses 28-31). Give a brief example from your life of when you were able to see something with the eyes of faith.

24. After their eyes were healed, Jesus warned them to keep the miracle a secret, but they "spread word of him through all that land" (verse 30). Why do you think they did not keep the secret and what would you have done in their place?

25. CONNECTION: "Do you believe that I can do this?" The healing miracles we read about today display the complete faith of those asking for healing. They trusted in Jesus' power to heal and actively sought out his help, even a gentile official humbled himself before Jesus. From these stories we learn that trusting in God to heal us does not mean only prayer--transformation comes when, along with trust, we commit our resources to seeking help for ourselves or others. Can you share an example of prayers answered by the grace of God when you or another took action?

Read Luke 10:2 and consider the ways God is calling you to be bold and brave. Let this thought lead you into prayer today

FINAL QUESTION of the WEEK

This week we studied four more healing miracles of Jesus. Reflect on one of these and how it can bring healing into your life or a loved one's.

Read pages 51-58 in the *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Gospel According to Matthew* by Barbara E. Reid, O.P. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE) © 2010, 1991, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

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