



Study Series

Follow Me: Week Five

The power of Jesus: Marc Rader

Bible

Matthew 9:27-34 (NIV)

Jesus Heals the Blind and the Mute

27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you"; **30** and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." **31** But they went

out and spread the news about him all over that region.

32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. **33** And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."

34 But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

Sermon Summary

This week we turn from Jesus' teaching to His miraculous healing; what they say about Jesus and the implications for following Him.

It is important, right off the bat, to recognise that there aren't that many healing accounts in the Old Testament. In fact, nearly all of the healing miracles are performed by Elijah and Elisha. Their ministry took place in a time when the people of God had abandoned Him for the Baals and other false idols, and the miracles the prophets performed demonstrated God's supremacy. So, when Matthew piles on healing after healing in chapters 8-9 we should take note; this is extraordinary. And while Jesus performs some of the same miracles as Elisha – healing a leper and raising a child to life – Matthew makes it clear that Jesus exceeds any of the Old Testament prophets in the last healing that he includes in these chapters; that of the blind and mute. We might not think these healings are the most significant but they are miracles that were associated with the age to come and the Messiah (see Isaiah 35:5-6). These actions demonstrate that, in Jesus, the presence and power of God is active; the Kingdom of Heaven is indeed near.

One of the important features of many of the healing accounts is the role of faith in those who are healed. What is critical to note is that faith was not created by the miracles, but preceded them. Those who approached Jesus in Matthew 8-9 express some sort of faith that was exercised in their approach and request of Jesus. The important implication of this is that their faith didn't depend on the miracle. They may have been disappointed if Jesus hadn't healed them, but their faith preceded it.

It is also important to note that miracles are no guarantee of faith. The Pharisees, at the end of our text, having seen what everyone else has seen, ascribe Jesus' power to the devil! The crowds are amazed but don't "do the math" and remain only amazed rather than finding faith.

The implication for following Jesus is to begin to ask what we believe about Jesus. This is the question that Matthew is forcing us to answer as we read his account and the central one of the gospel. And if we have some faith in Jesus we can begin to exercise that faith by approaching Him in prayer and asking Him to change our lives. One of the things that Matthew makes clear is that Jesus is not the refusing type; everyone who approaches him receives what they have asked. And while the question of unanswered prayer is a thorny one, we continue to ask because our faith is in Jesus not in a miracle given in His name.

Questions

These questions are a guide for conversation. Please take your time over them, and don't feel in a rush to finish them. The objective of a group discussion is to engage in meaningful conversation around a Biblical idea, invite the Holy Spirit to lead your time of reflection.

Have a go at question 1 before reading the passage.

1. Opening Discussion: Take some time to list from memory, your beliefs about Jesus on a piece of paper. Try to include characteristics that have an impact on the way you live, as well as descriptions of who you believe Him to be. Take turns to share your lists with the group. What ideas are common and unique to your lists?
2. Read Matthew 9:27-34 aloud. As you read, or hear it read, notice if there are words or phrases that seemed to stand out. What are they? (Try to resist the urge to explain *why* they stood out – this is about creating space for often familiar passages to say something new to us, allowing God to show you something). Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you to a word or phrase, take time, and share what you've been lead to.
3. The Bible records very few instances of miraculous healing in the Old Testament. Whilst many more healings are recorded in the New, the fact that the majority of those are attributed to Jesus, and seemingly so effortlessly, makes them all the more significant. What do these healings suggest about Jesus?
4. It is important to recognise that in the accounts described in Matthew 8 and 9, faith was evident *before* healing occurred, and that healing is not dependant on us, or more specifically, our perceived level of faith. In light of this, how would you describe the relationship between faith and healing?
5. How does the distinction between a faith in Jesus and faith in miracles help make some sense of unanswered prayer?
6. How might the discussions you've had tonight affect your prayer life, and more specifically your expectations in prayer?

Prayer

Take some time to pray for each other, and in particular, consider each other's responses to question 6. Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you to pray, perhaps with greater expectation, as He leads us to greater hope in Jesus.