



G R O W A T H O M E

DAY 4

READ

MATTHEW | CHAPTERS 7 + 8

FOCUS

'WHEN JESUS CAME DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINSIDE, LARGE CROWDS FOLLOWED HIM. ²A MAN WITH LEPROSY CAME AND KNELT BEFORE HIM AND SAID, "LORD, IF YOU ARE WILLING, YOU CAN MAKE ME CLEAN." ³JESUS REACHED OUT HIS HAND AND TOUCHED THE MAN. "I AM WILLING," HE SAID. "BE CLEAN!" IMMEDIATELY HE WAS CLEANSED OF HIS LEPROSY.

REFLECTION from PASTOR CODY SURRETT

For those of you who are not familiar with the Bible, let me step back a little bit and give you an overview of not only Matthew, but where it fits within the scriptures. The first four books of the New Testament are the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). They contain the stories of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. However, within those four books, the first three are called the Synoptic Gospels because they contain many of the same stories, but tell them from different perspectives. Matthew comes from a Jewish perspective, focusing on Jesus being the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the promised Messiah.

In Chapter 7 of Matthew's Gospel, we see the end of the Sermon on the Mount and hear some of Jesus' most famous teachings. They're famous, not just for their profundity, but for the authority that Jesus speaks with and the claims He makes about heaven, hell, and being a true disciple. In Chapter 8, Jesus comes down from the mountain and begins healing people. His work draws large crowds who want to see this miracle worker and possibly receive one themselves.

In today's devotional I don't want to focus on one specific miracle, but on Jesus' miracles in general. Whenever I read about Jesus' miracles, two questions pop into my mind: 1. Did Jesus actually perform miracles? 2. What was the purpose of the miracles? As a modern, scientific-minded, skeptical leaning person, on its face, the idea of a miracle seems a bit far fetched. In this chapter, Jesus raises a young girl from the dead. Are we really supposed to believe that? How many people have you ever seen who came back from the dead?

The answer to my question depends on a more fundamental question: does God exist? If so, then miracles are not an issue. If God was able to create all time, space, and matter (and the laws that govern it), He is able and powerful enough to intervene whenever, however, and wherever He wants. I happen to think there are lots of good philosophical and scientific reasons to believe God exists, so let's address the second question.

What was the purpose of the miracles? Two words: Power and Pointer. One of the main motivations Matthew has for telling these stories of Jesus miracles is to show that Jesus has power and authority over nature (displayed when calms the winds/waves), mankind (when He heals people's bodies), and even the spiritual world (when He casts out demons). Jesus' miracles were displays of power unlike the world had ever seen. They were not simply displays of power and authority, however, they were also pointers.

Jesus miracles point us back to the Beginning: pointing us to the time before sin entered the world and God's creation was nothing but good. Pointing us forward to how things will be again one day when He returns and makes all things new. There will be no more sickness, war, suffering, death, or grief. Everything will be again just as He intended it from the beginning. So miracles are not a breaking of the natural laws, but they are a restoration of them. They are not violating the laws, but putting them back to how they were supposed to be. Miracles are actually the only truly natural thing in the world. In a world that has been turned upside down by sin, miracles give us a glimpse of what things will look like when He puts all things back to right.



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REFLECTION from PASTOR CODY SURRATT (CONT'D)

Here's what this means for us, if Jesus was not content with how the world is, we shouldn't be either. Our job as Christians is to help put the world back together: to serve the poor, heal the sick, comfort the grieving. We are to bring peace in the storms and be a light in the darkness. If we do this the right way and God uses us, not only will we begin to help put the world back the way it's supposed to be, but we will point people to what they really need--which is a relationship with Christ. In the end, that is the only thing that matters, that is the only thing that lasts--all else will fade and the only thing that will remain is your relationship with Christ.

QUESTIONS

- AFTER WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TODAY, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE PROBABILITY OF BIBLICAL MIRACLES BEING TRUE TO SOMEONE WHO ASKED? HOW ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THESE MIRACLES?
- WE DON'T HAVE TO LOOK FAR TO SEE PLACES IN OUR WORLD THAT AREN'T THE WAY THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE. WHAT ARE SOME (POVERTY, INJUSTICE, DISEASE) THAT FRUSTRATE YOU THE MOST?
- HOW CAN YOU BRING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CURRENT STORM TO THOSE AROUND YOU?

DAILY DEVOTION