KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 8:23-9:8

(Sermon from Sunday 13 August 2023, Richard van Lieshout)

Sermon Outline

- There was a lot to cover this week, with three stunning miracle stories with lots of potential rabbit trails to follow!
- I simply worked through the three miracle stories, one by one.

A. **Introduction**: The blending of the discipleship encounter from last week into the 3 miracle stories this week.

1. **Miracle story no 1 (8:23-27)**
   - Emphasising "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" (V26)

2. **Miracle story no 2 (8:28-34)**
   - Emphasising "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (V29)

3. **Miracle story no 3 (9:1-8)**
   - Emphasising "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." (V2)

1. Information

a) Read the passage, perhaps twice using two different versions

b) Fill in any info that didn't make it into the sermon.

- There is **quite a lot of information in the CG manual** (**page 10-12**), that was not covered in the sermon[1]. Have a look and familiarise yourself, either to cover questions that may come up, or to give additional information should you feel it significant and suitable for your group.

[1] These could easily have been three separate sermons!

2. **Activation**

- Below are some activation questions based on the sermon outline.

1. **Miracle story no 1:** Authority over the **natural world**

i. Matthew clearly writes this account in a way that we can see the connection with discipleship, ie following Jesus means getting in a boat that would lead to a life-threatening situation! **Ask your group for stories on how following Jesus has led to a real sense of fear**. Note that we're not yet talking about fear in general, but specifically related to 'getting in the boat' with Jesus.

ii. **Discuss the implications of Jesus's 'teaching moment': "*Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?*" (V26). Compare it to a similar statement in 6:30-31 around fears relating to provision**. In the sermon I mentioned that it is clear that the disciples had genuine faith, but it is was limited in its awareness of Jesus's power**. Discuss how this relates to real fears we face today (here you can talk more broadly!)**

2. **Miracle story no 2:** Authority over **evil**

iii. Here I don't think it would be wise to go down the rabbit hole on discussing demonology![2] The point here is Jesus's authority over forces of evil. **Discuss in your group the reality of evil, particularly as you see it manifested in the violence of life in SA. Discuss how this awesome depiction of Jesus's authority over evil AND the final judgment of evil, should fortify us in our lives today.**

3. **Miracle story no 3:** Authority over **sin**

iv. Here it would be helpful to review the ultimate mission of Jesus as uploaded into his name: "*he will save his people from their sins*" (Matt 1:21). While the forgiveness of sins has been hinted at before[3], this is the first actual story demonstrating Jesus's authority over sin, meaning his authority to forgive sin. This is clear in v6. **Make sure your group understands this**.

v. In this sermon I mention how this is the most spectacular of the miracle stories, in that here Jesus shows his authority over the root of all calamity (created world, evil, sickness), and therefore how incredible the words "*Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven*" are. As Christians, we are more amazed at the physical miracles of Jesus, than the offer for forgiveness. **Discuss why this is so, and consolidate as a group an amazement at this demonstration of authority**!

---

[2] We will get there in chapter 12, possible with extra teaching on the subject, so please don't go there yet!

[3] Matthew's editorial comment after the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, relating to the fulfillment of Isaiah 53.

3. **Implementation**

- I strongly encourage you to spend time in reflective prayer (perhaps also with silent confession), thinking through the statement "*Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven*". As a CG leader, pray for your group beforehand that there would be a heart-softening moment as we experience afresh the joy of forgiveness.

- Feel free to use this corporate prayer of confession if you think it would be helpful:

  Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
  we have sinned against you and against our fellow men,
  in thought and word and deed,
  through negligence, through weakness,
  through our own deliberate fault.

  We are truly sorry,
  and repent of all our sins.

  (Pause for reflection & silent confession)

  For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,
  forgive us all that is past;
  renew us, lead us, and empower us by your Holy Spirit, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,
  to the glory of your holy name.
  Amen.