

Text: Mt 9.2-17

Today I want to do something a little different.

We are about to start Acts 24, but in Bible reading the other day, I noticed something striking in Matthew 9. At least, it was striking to me, and I spent most of the week thinking about it. Consequently, I'm not really ready for Acts 24, but I am ready for Matthew 9.

Our title is:

The Miracle of Matthew

Let's read Mt 9.2-17, then we will work our way into the message.

Part of the idea of this message is connected with the notion that Matthew organized his material *thematically* rather than *chronologically*.

We know this because when you try to create a harmony of the Gospels, you find Matthew cut up and completely in a different order from the way we have it in our Bible.

I want to run down a list of the "stories" we find in Mt 8-9 to show you what I mean and to create the setting for our message.

Jesus heals a leper (8.1-4)

Jesus heals the centurion's servant (8.5-13)

Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and others (8.14-17)

Jesus instructs about discipleship (8.18-22)

Jesus calms the storm (8.23-27)

Jesus casts out demons from the demoniacs of Gadara (8.28-9.1)

Jesus heals the paralytic (9.2-8)

Jesus calls Matthew and Matthew holds a meal at his house (9.9-13)

Jesus answers John's question about fasting (9.14-17)

Jesus raises Jairus' daughter (9.18-26)

Jesus heals two blind men (9.27-31)

Jesus heals a mute demon possessed man (9.32-34)

Summary statement: Jesus goes about teaching, preaching, healing (9.35-38)

Now to put these roughly in Chronological order:

Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and others (8.14-17)

Jesus heals a leper (8.1-4)

Jesus heals the paralytic (9.2-8)

Jesus calls Matthew and Matthew holds a meal at his house (9.9-13)

Jesus answers John's question about fasting (9.14-17)

... several other events (in Mt 12) ...

Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7)

Jesus heals the centurion's servant (8.5-13)

... several other events ...

Jesus calms the storm (8.23-27)

Jesus casts out demons from the demoniacs of Gadara (8.28-9.1)

Jesus raises Jairus' daughter (9.18-26)

Jesus heals two blind men (9.27-31)

Jesus heals a mute demon possessed man (9.32-34)

Summary statement: Jesus goes about teaching, preaching, healing (9.35-38) ... and this leads in to sending the 12 out two by two with instructions of Mt 10.

So, you see how the chronology is different from the way we have it in Matthew. My point is that Matthew is communicating particular themes, and part of the way he does it is by arranging the material in a non-chronological way.

I found a very interesting article called "The Plot of Matthew," where the author looked at Matthew from a literary perspective, analyzing it as a story with a plot that Matthew advances by the things he includes and the way he includes them.

The section our passage is in has a series of miracles surrounding it on either side. There are 9 specific miracles recorded, along with reference to many other miracles that Jesus performed in his ministry. The article I read called this section, "Jesus' Mighty Work."¹

"These accounts are arranged into three groups of three stories each. All but one of the miracles involve physical healings of various individuals. ... In between the three triads appear two pairs of passages dealing with discipleship."²

¹ Frank J. Matera, "The Plot of Matthew's Gospel," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1987): 237.

² Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 137.

Our passage is one of the passages dealing with discipleship, and very specifically, Matthew's discipleship.

Our message today will focus on how this account ties in with the rest of the material, especially chapter 9, which speaks to us about our discipleship.

Proposition: Embracing Jesus as the Christ means taking a stand of faith in submission to him.

“stand” and “submission” may seem odd words to put together in a sentence like that ... so listen on to the end ...

I. The meaning of the paralytic (2-8)

A. The other Gospels add the “opening of the roof” bits

1. The man was carried to Jesus by four friends
2. They couldn't get in to see Jesus
3. So, they tore up the roof and lowered the man down before him

B. The Lord's first reaction: “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.” (2)

1. The scribes opposed him (in their hearts) (3)
2. The question was authority
3. Hints at authority earlier in the passage:

Mt 8.27 The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

4. But does he have authority to forgive sins?
5. Jesus answers the unspoken challenge:

Mt 9.4-7 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? ⁵ “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and walk ‘? ⁶ “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins “— then He said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.” ⁷ And he got up and went home.

6. The Lord showed his authority by healing the man with a word
 - a. Authority over disease

- b. Authority over sin
- c. The crowd got the message

Mt 9.8 But when the crowds saw *this*, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

- d. And the man got up

II. The implications for Matthew (9-13)

A. All the Gospels put the call of Matthew next, chronologically

- 1. Both Mark and Luke call him Levi – but Jews often had more than one name
- 2. As Jesus leaves the healing of the paralytic, he comes upon Matthew, and bids him follow

Note: we must remember that all of this is before the Sermon on the Mount, which came just after the selection of the 12.

- 3. Had Matthew encountered Jesus previously?
 - a. No record, but...
 - b. He is in Capernaum; how could he have missed him?
 - c. He responds immediately, just as the fishermen did at their nets (but they had already encountered Jesus)
 - d. Surely, he must have already had some contact or observation of Jesus prior to this encounter
- 4. The connection with the preceding
 - a. Matthew didn't witness the healing — would he have heard about it?
 - b. Notice this one detail in the two responses

Mt 9.6-7 "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home."⁷
And he got up and went home.

Mt 9.9 ¶ As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" **And he got up and followed Him.**

c. Matthew got up out of his sin, and followed Jesus in faith

How do we know? (well, there is the nomination to the twelve, but look what comes next)

B. The gathering at Matthew's house (10-13)

1. This may have happened some time later, not immediately
2. Matthew invited all his sinful friends (10)
3. The Pharisees criticized Jesus for this association (11)
4. Jesus responded: He came to heal the sick ... especially the sin-sick (12-13)

So far, we see a link between the healing of the paralytic and the call of Matthew, but how does this fit in with the rest?

III. The understanding of the new way (14-17)

A. A question about fasting from John's disciples (14)

B. Jesus answers that this isn't the time for fasting for his disciples (15)

C. But then he has these cryptic proverbs: (16-17)

1. No unshrunk cloth on an old garment
2. No new wine in old wineskins

What does Jesus mean?

D. Jesus means to say he is doing something new

1. There is a transition going on between OT and NT
2. We are no longer under the old ways, we are under new ways
3. We are no longer trapped in the endless cycle of OT sacrifices and external religion
4. We are no longer bound by sin itself

The paralytic got up and walked.

Matthew got up and followed Jesus.

Why would he follow Jesus? Jesus has the authority to heal and to forgive sins — look at all the miracles in this section, ch. 8-9.

IV. Closing confirmations (18-38)

A. The raising of Jairus daughter, the healing of the woman with the issue of blood (18-26)

1. Get up little girl
2. Get up old woman

B. The healing of the blind men (27-31)

Get up, you blind men. See!

C. The healing of the mute demoniac (32-34)

Get up, you mute, and speak!

D. Jesus went everywhere, teaching, preaching, and healing: and calling for disciples to enter the harvest (35-38)

Matthew got up and followed Jesus.

Conclusion:

Proposition: Embracing Jesus as the Christ means taking a stand of faith in submission to him.

You can be healed of your sins, and ultimately of your sicknesses.

You can serve the King of kings in the harvest that is come.

Get up and follow him.