

## Christ the Center of Our Need Matthew 8:1-17

### Introduction

- How much of our life begins with the phrase, “I need?”
  - I need food
  - I need more sleep
  - I need strength to make it through the day
- Our need points to the fragile state of our bodies. We are unable to sustain ourselves without something more; “I need”
- Need is not necessarily bad either
  - It makes us aware of our weakness
  - It allows the opportunity to be cared for; and loved
  - It gives us purpose
  - It motivates us
- Yet, our lives can be consumed with “need” to the point that it’s all we can think about
  - It impedes our function
  - It makes us helpless, and vulnerable
- **Matthew 8**
  - A chapter that describes Jesus healing several people
  - While we marvel at the ease in which Jesus heals the people that he encounters, there’s a much deeper point that Jesus is trying to make.
  - How many of us have heard sermons in which pastors have encouraged people to just have faith and God will heal your need?
    - While the people in chapter 8 are diverse not only in their need, but also in their social standing, they all have faith in common.
    - Jesus does recognize their faith as he heals them
    - However, this chapter is about something much more than just having enough faith for Jesus to meet your need.
    - If we can get to that greater purpose, we may discover the healing power that Jesus offers for us today.
- The Setting
  - **Matthew 8:1**
  - The backdrop to these miraculous healings is Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount
    - In the sermon, Jesus redefines who will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven
    - While the crowds are trying to process everything that Jesus has just said, Matthew describes the impression that Jesus left on the crowds
    - **Matthew 7:28-29**
    - Jesus is recognized as one who has authority, unlike what they had heard from the scribes
    - Isn’t that Jesus’ point; to show a power and authority that exceeds the world?
  - Chapter 8 turns from Jesus teaching, to Jesus taking action by healing

- It is the power and authority of the Kingdom demonstrated within the very need of the people
  - An example that what Jesus has been teaching about is not some remote theory or philosophy for life, but a reality that can be experienced.
  - As Jesus comes off the mountain, out of the pulpit, if you will, he encounters
    - A man with leprosy
    - A centurion who has a paralyzed servant
    - A woman who is sick with a fever
    - Two demon possessed men
- CPR Class this Week
  - Fire Department Meeting-CPR Class
  - I've had different instructional classes where I've been shown how to do CPR
  - It's a totally different experience when you are in a class full of EMT's and Firefighters
    - For them, this was a course to sit through information that not only had they heard several times before, but had actually experienced
    - I immediately felt inadequate, out of my league
    - While they were sharing their war stories, I was thinking, "God, I really hope I never have to use this!"
    - Began wondering if the real dummy in the room was not the one lying in front of us, but the inexperienced chaplain.
  - What's the first question they ask, "What would you do if you encountered a medical emergency?"
    - That question immediately gets your attention
    - You either have the right answer, or you are fumbling around
    - We all know that in a medical emergency you don't have time to fumble around. You have to meet the need!
  - I survived the course and got my certification, but please, no one decide to pass out or stop breathing this morning!
  - Here's the question for us: How do we make Christ the Center of our Need?

### Humility and Faith

- **Matthew 8:2-4**
  - Almost as amazing as Jesus healing the leper, is that Jesus would touch the man
    - Leprosy was a highly contagious disease
    - Anyone with leprosy immediately became an outcast
    - They were required by the Law to show themselves to the priest for examination
    - When leprosy was diagnosed by the priest, the individual would then have to be quarantined away from the public.
  - Notice what the leper says to Jesus

- “You can make me clean”
  - He knows the requirements of the law
  - He knows that the priest can’t heal him. The role of the priest is to make a diagnosis and then determine when it is safe for the leper to return to society.
  - There’s something different about Jesus; he’s not like all the other priests
    - Remember, **Matthew 7:28-29**
    - Not only is the leper taking a step outside of the normal protocol, he is acknowledging the authority of Jesus.
- I’ve talked to people who have received an unfavorable diagnosis
  - They know the potential outcome may not be good
  - It’s in that moment that faith becomes vitally important
  - Can we put the diagnosis in God’s hands; that no matter the outcome we have the certainty that our lives are under the authority of Christ?
  - That’s a difficult place to be, especially when all you can think about is the immediate need, but its what it means to make Christ the center of your need.
- The leper approached Jesus with both humility and faith
  - It took humility to expose his need to Jesus
  - It took faith to believe in Jesus’ authority above the protocol
- **Matthew 8:5-9**
  - We learn a similar lesson from the Centurion
    - The difference between the Centurion and the Leper was that the Centurion represented power and privilege
    - However, the centurion was not the one in need, but his servant who was paralyzed
    - Another difference between the Centurion and the leper was that the centurion was a Gentile, while the leper was a Jew.
      - While the leper was breaking Jewish protocol by going to Jesus, the Centurion was breaking social protocol by approaching Jesus. He was asking help from a Jew!
    - Despite their differences, the leper and the centurion respond to Jesus in a similar way: humility and faith
  - Notice what the centurion says to Jesus
    - **Matthew 8:8-**
      - unworthy to have Jesus enter home
      - I’m not a Jew, but I have faith
    - **Matthew 8:10**
      - The centurion acknowledges Jesus’ authority
      - Rather than follow protocol, the centurion humbles himself and puts his faith in Jesus

- If you are going to make Jesus the Center of your need, you have to approach your need in a different way
  - Too much of the time, our needs become the center of our life
    - They consume us
    - The need becomes about us-it becomes our identity
    - Instead, we've got to humble ourselves before God by giving him the need, allowing him to become the center of our lives instead of the need, and then acknowledge his authority in our lives by faith.
    - Make Christ the Center of your need by humility and faith

### The Kingdom Is Our Need

- In the middle of these stories of healing, Jesus instructs the crowds about what it really means to follow him
  - It begins when a scribe proclaims to Jesus that he will follow Jesus wherever he goes
  - What are the chances that the scribe realized the tide shifting?- the crowds were now listening more to what Jesus had to say than what he had to say
  - One of the disciples, then asked to tend to a family need before following Jesus, and Jesus then tells what it really means to be a disciple- follow Jesus at all cost
- If Christ is going to become the center of our need; we can't make our need the center of our life
  - **Matthew 7:27** tells us that "the crowds were astonished at his teachings."
  - **Matthew 8:1b** tells us that "great crowds followed him"
  - **Matthew 8:10** tells us that Jesus turned to the crowds as he marveled at the faith of the centurion.
  - **Matthew 8:28** as the disciples fear the storm on the open sea, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith."
  - Notice, however, those who really understood Jesus' message.
    - The leper who was an outcast
    - The powerful centurion
    - These men understood that in their moment of need, they needed Jesus at the center of their life.
    - Jesus spoke truth in a way that no one else had spoken to them before
      - Humility drew them to Jesus
      - Faith enabled them to step outside of normal protocol
      - Despite their present circumstances, they needed Jesus more than anything else.
      - They knew something that the disciples would later learn on the boat; Jesus can calm the storms of life and the winds and the seas will obey him.
- When Christ is at the center of your life, your needs do not become your focus. Jesus becomes the center of everything through humility and faith

### Jesus Carries Our Need

- **Matthew 8:16-17**
  - One of the signs of the Messiah was that he would heal the sick and oppressed
  - Why was this significant?
    - Of course, there is a need
    - But more importantly, it signals a change in power and authority
  - One of the phrases that is carried throughout the Gospels is that the Kingdom of God is at Hand
    - Jesus preaches- repent and believe for the Kingdom of God is at hand (Mark 1:15)
    - Jesus teaches us to pray- “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:12)
    - When both the leper who is a Jew, and the centurion who is a Gentile, come to Jesus- it shows how wide the gates of the kingdom are open to all who come humbly and exercise faith
    - When Jesus casts out the demons in Matthew 8:31 and they beg Jesus to cast them out of the men into the pigs near by- it shows that all authority and power dwell with Jesus
- Jesus takes our needs and carries them
  - **Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”**
  - **Isaiah 53:5, “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed.”**
  - Jesus takes our guilt, or shame, our pain, our need upon himself to carry so that you and I might be set free!
- Hanging cabinets in our kitchen
  - Never done it before
  - Watch a You Tube video to figure it out
  - A couple screws in each cabinet attached to a stud will carry a lot of weight
- I think some times we look at how much weight we are carrying in the cabinets of our life, and wonder how anyone could lift what we are shouldering
  - Jesus says, with a couple of nails and a cross- I can carry whatever you’ve got!
  - Don’t let your need become the center of your life. Let Jesus carry the need so that he can become the center.
- CPR Class
  - Instead of 15 compressions and two breathes, they now instruct you to do 30 compressions- and if you can’t breath at all, just keep doing compressions
  - Why? Because when the heart doesn’t work anymore, the compressions pump blood from the heart to the brain
  - The blood flow is what is essential to bringing someone back to life
- Similar with the Resurrection of Jesus
  - Our sin is great. It’s a weight too great for any of us to carry.
  - Yet, Jesus’ shed blood on the cross can carry your sin

- And Jesus resurrection from the dead can pump life back into your soul
- And make a dead person rise from the grave of guilt, shame, pain, loss, fear, anxiety, illness, and whatever else!

### Conclusion

- What is your need today?
  - Has it taken over your life?
  - Let Jesus carry that need, and let him become the center of your life
  - Humility and Faith
  - “And to the centurion Jesus said, ‘Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.’” (Matthew 8:13)