

Matthew 8-9 and Covenant Service – 8 Feb 2026

Isa 61.1-3

Matt 8.1-4, 14-22; 9.35-38

Teaching and narrative intertwined

Jesus doesn't separate preaching/teaching and ministry but combines them:

- Message = “the kingdom of God is near” and I am King; this is what it looks like...” – describes the values of the kingdom in chs 5-7 and other 4 blocks of teaching (**5.1-7.29**; **10.11-42**; **13.1-52**; **18.1-35**; **24.1-25.46**).
- Ministry = both the proof that Jesus is King (has the authority of the Great King), and manifestation/revelation of the kingdom

Can't say the preaching/teaching takes priority in Jesus' mission. The two = interdependent. Jesus didn't just teach formally but as he ministered along the way, responding to individuals/crowds he encountered, such as the two would-be disciples in 8.18-22.

Sometimes too preaching/teaching is used as a shorthand for both, e.g. Mark 1.38, cf. 1.39. So too in the early church, while the apostles' priority was prayer and “the ministry of the word,” rather than serving at tables, it didn't mean that they didn't heal, exorcise and earn a living (at least in Paul's case).

In this narrative block (chs 8-9), mainly recounting Jesus' ministry, which falls between 1st and 2nd blocks, Matthew recounts 10 specific miracles:

- 8 healings
- 1 exorcism (of 2 men)
- 1 calming of storm.

+ summary references to all who asked/many being healed/delivered.

1. **Proof of Jesus' authority** – see esp. 8.27, 34; 9.8, 33 - over sin, sickness, death and Satan
2. **Demonstrations of God's kingdom** breaking in and what it means.

CF. the 10 plagues in Exodus by which Moses both

1. demonstrated his authority
2. showed God's power over Egypt/Egyptians

Do not drive a wedge between Jesus' teaching/preaching and ministry, or prioritise one over the other. The two go together, inseparable.

Also, the fulfilment of (OT) scripture = in actions, not words:

Jesus the Messianic King inaugurating the time of God's kingly rule.

Key verse for interpreting this section = **9.36**

“He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” AN EMOTION! – “put a new spirit within you”. This = key EMOTION of Kingdom/God.

Who harasses? – wolves! Scribes and Pharisees (meant to be shepherds!), Romans, Satan.

Matt 8.1-4 Healing of Leper

“Down from the Mountain” - cf. Moses:

- a golden calf and false worship,

Jesus:

- a leper, rejected and alienated by society and faith community – outcast.

Equally repugnant to God: idolatry and sickness+alienation

Approaches Jesus humbly, but with great faith.

- does not presume that he will be healed or even that Jesus will pay him any regard, nor does he consider himself worthy of it => “if you will...” Doesn’t doubt Jesus’ power to heal, rather his willingness – whether he will consider him worthy of healing.

Same qualities – humility and faith – seen in the healing of the Centurion’s servant (following)

Jesus’ response = **driven by compassion**, as was the Centurion’s request.

NB. Has not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfil them” (5.17). The Law says clearly that even to touch an unclean person unwittingly is a sin for which the person who does it bears guilt and must make a sin offering to the priest (Lev. 5.3-6). The person also becomes unclean himself (transfer of uncleanness).

Prophets say:

However, *it was* our sicknesses *that* He Himself bore,
And our pains *that* He carried; Isa 53.4, NAS

Jesus fulfils the Law and Prophets by taking away the leprosy/uncleanness, bearing it himself, and restoring the man to the community. See v.17.

Matt 8.14-22

Peter's mother-in-law

Mark (1.29ff.) and Luke tell us that it is a sabbath and Jesus has come from the synagogue. Under oral law, Jesus should not be doing such 'work' as healing until after the sabbath is over. That's why people come in the evening (v.16). So this is a forbidden act (to the Scribes and Pharisees), but Jesus won't delay. Again, touch is involved.

The application of the quotation from Isa 53 shows that Jesus didn't bear our diseases and infirmities (physical, not spiritual) only on the cross (v's our sins), he bore them away in his ministry. This, as much as the bearing of our sins, was his kingly work. Satan's kingdom was being driven back, and Jesus' advancing, even before the cross.

Two would-be disciples:

1. The too keen – hadn't reckoned with the cost, or realised just how different following Jesus would be from following any other rabbi: he had no fixed abode
2. The not serious enough. Almost certainly saying, "Wait till my father dies, then I'll follow you". In rabbinic teaching burying your Father = the most sacred duty, ahead even of reciting the *shema*. Yet Jesus says, following him must take precedence.

Matt 9.35-38

Jesus = driven by one thing alone: compassion. And healed *everyone*.

Jesus didn't see them so much as lost (wandered off, their fault) but as sheep without a shepherd, i.e. abandoned - by those who should have watched over them, who now = 'wolves' who harass them.

Evokes Ezek 34 – bad shepherds. See too Num 27.16

"Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation **17**who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd."

and 1 Kgs 22.17

And he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, 'These have no master; let each return to his home in peace.'"

Jesus is the true and good shepherd who will lay down his life for the sheep.

“The harvest is plentiful” = encouragement, plenty to do. See too 1 Cor 15.58 and Eph 2.10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Note two things as Jesus’ authority demonstrated and his kingdom revealed in his ministry (see above at beginning):

1. Those whom the religious leaders in Jesus’ day saw as outcasts, unclean, to be kept away from – the “lost” – Jesus saw as abandoned, and as grain ripe for the harvest.

2. In 9.33-34 - those made outcasts (lepers, Gentiles, the possessed) recognise Jesus’ power and authority for what it is – from God, while those who should have understood him as the fulfilment of God’s promises instead see his power as from Satan.

As have our Covenant service today and think about our vision-values-goals (mission), what is our primary attitude towards “the lost”?

Sinners/rebels, or abandoned? Do we preach without reaching out in love and healing?

Makes me want to rethink our vision.

Vision

A Christ-centred, biblical and pioneering church within the Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa New Zealand.

v's a church that's living in Jesus' kingdom, preaching about it and demonstrating it? Driven by compassion?

Values – pillars of CCAANZ plus:

1. Grace and truth.

We seek to be like Jesus, who came “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14), upholding the ethics of the Kingdom of God without compromise, but in a way that imparts God's grace and not condemnation – i.e. with compassion

- Gary's Monday night addiction group

2. A holistic approach to the Gospel.

We seek to minister to the whole person (body, mind and spirit) and to be responsible stewards of God's creation (see Luke 4:18f.; Rom 8:19-25).

3. Familial relationships.

We endeavour to model our relationships as a Parish on that of the extended family/whanau, emphasizing: mutual commitment, respect, loyalty; Christ-like love for one another. We value all people equally, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, wealth, education, vocation or marital status (see 1 Cor 12:13).

- Strength of parochial ministry
- Homegroups – Bible study, but also prayer, care and fellowship
- Lads and Socks groups

4. Active membership.

We expect all members to faithfully: pray for the Church; attend worship, parish meetings and a fellowship group; and to support the parish financially (see Heb 10:19-25; 2 Cor 9).

Every-member ministry.

We take seriously the call to all members of Christ's Church to be ministers of the Gospel, recognising that "all these (ministries) are activated by one and the same Spirit" (1 Cor 12:11) and are therefore of equal worth.

- Involvement in services

Anglicanism.

We are thankful to God for our rich heritage as part of a historical and world-wide Church. We recognise the authority of our bishop and his appointed leaders and take seriously our responsibilities to our diocesan family (see Heb 13:7ff; 1 Tim 3).

- Together 2026, hosting Synod and clergy days

Goals

1. To worship God in Spirit and in truth
 - 8.30, 10.30, Wed
 - DRC and Indian churches
2. To love and care for one another
 - Gary and Pastoral care team
 - Small groups.
 - 2 womens' days
 - 2 men's camps
 - Parish dinner
3. To train, equip and release our people to serve God as mature disciples
 - Children and Youth: regular meetings, camps, Lighthouse, Light Party
 - Small groups
 - Nathaniel, Praxis, youth
 - Elisha
4. To serve our local community
 - Chaplaincy Deanwell and South City
 - Craft
 - Art
 - Tenants and hirers of building – sewing, te reo Maori, churches
5. To send and support mission partners
 - OMST
 - Missions month and Pastor Sylvester and Pushpa

- Nick and Esther, Ryan
6. To be a pioneering church
 - Cornerstone
 - Support for other churches, esp. Abide
 7. To be good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us
 - New playground
 - 170k off building = 730k

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of situations cause you to be moved to compassion? Are there particular people, or groups of people that God has given you a particularly compassionate heart towards? How has that compassion driven you to respond?
2. Why do you think some people sometimes take offence at expressions of compassion (as they did when Jesus healed or delivered people of demons)? What does that indicate about their hearts?
3. Jesus, *in this section of Matthew's Gospel*, speaks about the crowds not as people who are lost (through their own sin) but as "harassed... sheep without a shepherd". What difference does it make to the way we treat them when we see troubled/marginalised people in this way? To what extent, and in what ways, do you think Jesus would see people as harassed and without a shepherd today?
4. Discuss the church's vision statement. Remember, it's meant to be how we would like people outside the church to describe us. Do you agree it needs updating? If so, any suggestions would be welcomed.