

The Gospel of Matthew Mighty Deeds

Interpreting the Text:

1. How does the author of the gospel of Matthew depict the character Matthew, the tax collector, (9:9-13)? Does this characterization affect the way we should read the gospel? Or, conversely, does our understanding of the gospel's focus help us understand this characterization?
2. Jesus is frequently called "Son of David" in the course of his healing miracles in Matthew. How do the characters know Jesus' identity, and why does it matter?
3. In chapter 10, Jesus sends the disciples to proclaim the good news. What does he mean that "the kingdom of heaven has come near" (10:7)?

Applying the Text:

1. Who gets Jesus' attention in the healing miracles of chapters 8-9? There is an emerging discipline in New Testament scholarship – disability studies – that focuses on honoring the challenges of those who struggle with physical impairments and recognizing Jesus' call for compassion and justice (9:13). Who might be comparable in our society, and what can we offer them?
2. The Greek word for compassion in 9:36 ("Jesus had compassion for them") actually means "well-boweled." Compassion is supposed to come from our deepest, most inward places, from our guts. How do you understand compassion?
3. Jesus' instruction to his disciples not to rely on material things (10:9-10) is an important corrective for many of us in today's society, where status, power, and comfort are paramount. The Jesuit priest Henri Nouwen called this the "path of downward mobility": Jesus chooses pain, rejection, persecution and death rather than the "path of upward mobility" toward power, authority, influence, and wealth. How are we called to follow the disciples in this way in our own lives?

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