



When Love Comes to Town

Close Encounters With Jesus

HomeGroups@West

Session 1 Authority Matthew 8:1-17

The nature of the kingdom of God and the character of its citizens are the themes at the beginning of Matthew's gospel. The people who witnessed Jesus teaching were amazed at Jesus' authority as he spoke and were further amazed at his miraculous signs.

Matthew presents for us in chapter 8 the incredible evidence of Jesus having authority to heal, he is showing how he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4 to be our healer. In chapter 8 we start with a leper, then a foreigner and gentile oppressor and then an old sick lady; all people who were outsiders to the orthodox thinking about who belongs to the kingdom of God.

Exclusion is a real external and internal experience or perception for people who are seeking to find their place in God's kingdom.

Discuss how these three people would have experienced real exclusion- extend this to your own experiences and observations of being an outsider in a Christian community.

It is quite remarkable that the soldier in verse 5 sought Jesus out for help.

1. As you read his story what sort of person do you think he is? Remember he's a trained killer- do you like him? Would the crowd have liked him? Would Jesus have liked him?
2. **How could he be convinced that although he was excluded from the community of God's people, he was accepted by Jesus?**
3. **How significant do you think it is that Jesus reached out in a very public setting, to this soldier?**
4. There is a powerful parable going on in all these encounters- the power of Jesus' word and the signs that backed this up. **How did, and how does Jesus use both to establish his authority?**

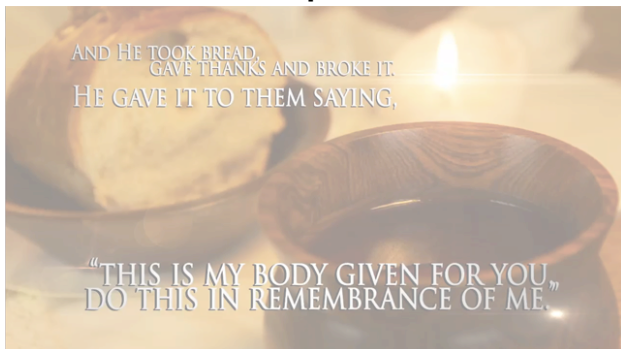


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5. Who do we identify with here? Whose shoes/sandals do we stand in? We are not Jesus- we are not the actual person- we are rather in the shoes of the people who saw and heard Jesus in action. **What would they have understood better as they witnessed this encounter? As we encounter Jesus, how do his words and signs impact us now?**

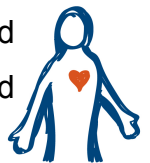


6. In church life we pull a lot on the word of the Lord, but we also pay attention to signs on the form of sacraments like communion. How does Jesus' authority take on a fuller revelation as we participate in celebrating communion? How does this sign

of 'his love coming to town' illustrate what Jesus says in verse 11?



Take time to investigate the on going crises of exclusion faced by Lepers (<https://www.leprosymission.org.uk>), foreigners and bed-bound people.



RESPOND

Create an opportunity to use a simple liturgy and have a time of participating together in remembering Jesus' death and triumphal victory of inclusion- 1John3:1. Let this lead you into praying for those who experience exclusion. Pray that the words and signs of Jesus would lead them to a complete understanding of who he is and his authority to include them in the kingdom of God. Pray for each other in your lives and mission this week.