



The Authority of Jesus Christ - Over Sight and Speech

Matthew 9:27-34

1. Two Miracles (verses 27-33a)
2. Two Responses (verses 33b-34)

Matthew 9:27-34

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, and saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" And after He had come into the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus *said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They *said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "Be it done to you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See [here.] let no one know [about this]!" But they went out, and spread the news about Him in all that land. And as they were going out, behold, a dumb man, demon-possessed, was brought to Him. And after the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the multitudes marveled, saying, "Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel." But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

Our outline this morning will be simple and straightforward. First, we will look at two miracles that occur in verses 27-33a. Next, we will see two different responses in verses 33b-34.

1. Two Miracles (verses 27-33a)

The first of these two miracles involves Jesus restoring sight to the blind.

a. Sight to the Blind

We pick up the story in verse 27:

As Jesus passed on from there two blind men followed Him, crying out, and saying "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"
(Matt. 9:27)

At the beginning of the verse, we are told "Jesus passed on from there." We presume that Matthew is referring to Jesus leaving the house of Jairus, the man whose daughter Jesus had raised from the dead in verses 18-26. While Jesus was walking, we are told two blind men were following him. Blindness was a common illness during the time that Jesus walked the earth. The people were often poor and lived in unsanitary settings where eye infections commonly went untreated. They did not have access to the antibiotics we use today to ward off infectious organisms that penetrate the eye. They did not have the level of eye care that is available in the modern world today. Most of the blind people in their culture were blind from birth. Blindness was often caused when a woman who was infected with gonorrhea gave birth to a child. As the baby passed through the birth canal, the disease would infect his eyes and lead to blindness in just a few days. So it seems reasonable to presume that these men were probably blind from birth.

It appears as if these two blind men were friends with one another. Just as the lepers had their colonies, the blind men had their buddies. In fact, the blind of those days were ostracized from the society in the same way that the lepers were. There was continual discussion whether these men were blind because of their own sin or because of their parent's sin. Jesus battles this very issue in John 9 when his disciples asked him why a certain man was blind. The two blind men in the passage before us are united by more than friendship. They are united in theology, united in faith, and share a united resolve to pursue Jesus for their healing. And pursue Jesus, they did! Let us look closely at their actions.

These blind men **followed Jesus** (verse 27). Following Jesus as he traveled was not particularly easy for these men. It's not that Jesus was travelling quickly or being elusive, but rather it was simply because these men were blind. As blind men, they would have certainly needed to elicit some help from someone who was standing nearby to guide them. It required a great effort on their part in order to follow Jesus.

These blind men **cried out to Jesus** (verse 27). They were vocal and loud. They cried out with a passion in their heart. As best we can tell, Jesus did not even acknowledge their words. Certainly, as Jesus traveled, he had many people around him. Perhaps the hustle and bustle made the noise too loud for Jesus to hear them. If this situation was anything like another situation which happened while Jesus was in Jericho, those around these two blind men would have "sternly told them to be quiet" (Matt. 20:31).

These blind men **begged Jesus for mercy** (verse 27). Their cries were not cries of tears. Their cries were cries for mercy. They said, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." The one who pleads for mercy is the one who has no other option left. Last week we looked at the desperate man and the desperate woman who had nowhere else to turn but to Jesus. These blind men were in the same predicament. They had no hope of being healed through ordinary means. They sought for help from the miracle-man! Their begging demonstrated great dependence

upon Jesus for help.

These blind men **pursued Jesus** (verse 28). It appears as if Jesus ignored these men and walked right into a certain house where he was going. But these men pursued Jesus until they could reach him. They demonstrated great persistence in their pursuit of Jesus.

These blind men **believed in Jesus** (verse 28). Once Jesus finally stopped His travelling, these men could finally reach Jesus. They came into the home and were presented before Jesus. We do not know how many other words were exchanged or what was said. It is obvious, though, that these men were asking to be healed. After seeing their condition, Jesus asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Their reply demonstrates their faith. They said, "Yes, Lord." Though these blind men could not see Jesus with their eyes, they had heard about Jesus with their ears. And they believed that Jesus could heal them. That is why they went to great efforts to meet Jesus. These blind men followed Jesus, cried out to Him, begged Him for mercy, pursued Him, and they did all these things because they believed in Him.

A few months ago, I remember speaking with someone who had gone to see the doctor. There were many, many people who were waiting to see this doctor on this particular day. The person made the observation to me that all of the patients knew they needed to be helped by a doctor, so they were willing to wait a long time to see him. What a sad thing it is when people do not seek their need for spiritual sight with as much zeal as they seek for their physical health.

These blind men believed that Jesus could heal them. This is especially noticed in how they pleaded with Jesus. Back in verse 27, we see them crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" Though these blind men could not read, they could listen to others read the Scriptures. They could discuss the Scriptures with each other. They could form conclusions about the Scriptures. They certainly were told of Jesus and His healing activities upon the earth. They heard about the healing of the leper, the Centurion's servant, the lame man, and Jairus' daughter. They concluded that Jesus was the Messiah. This is demonstrated in the choice of words they used. They addressed Jesus as "The Son of David."

If you are familiar with the Bible, these words, "the Son of David" ought to stir in your mind an identification with the Messiah. Let us look at Matthew 12:23. In that passage, we see Jesus healing a man who was born blind and dumb. The multitudes of Jewish people saw this and were amazed at the healing power of Jesus. They were asking, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" (Matt. 12:23). They were inquiring as to whether or not Jesus was the Messiah! In Matthew chapter 21, we see Jesus entering into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. The multitudes present at that event laid down their palm branches and cried out saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. 21:9). The multitudes understood the Messianic implications of such an entrance. Jesus is the Messiah! A few verses later, in Matthew 21:15, the chief priests and the scribes saw Jesus' entrance into the city and how he cleansed the temple and how the children were crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David." In verse 15, we read that these religious leaders "became indignant" and said to Jesus, "Do You hear what these are saying?" The implication is that Jesus should certainly put an end to this nonsense. The leaders want Jesus to tell everyone that He cannot be the Messiah. These blind men had put it all together. They had come to realize who Jesus really was. They knew the Scriptures. They heard about Jesus' life and miracles. They put these two things together. They said, "Have mercy on us, Son of David! ... Have mercy on us, O Messiah, who has come to save!" (Matt. 9:27).

When the blind men finally were able to stand before Jesus, He healed them. Matthew tells us that Jesus, "touched their eyes, saying, 'Be it done to you according to your faith.' And their eyes were opened" (Matt. 9:29). I am reminded of the story of Fanny Crosby, the American hymn writer. She lost her sight when she was six weeks old. The story is told of how a preacher once came to her and told her that it was a great pity that God did not give her sight at birth. Fanny Crosby simply replied that there was no reason for pity. Rather, she was grateful! She said, "when I get to Heaven, the first face that I shall ever see will be that of my Savior!" What a glorious day this was for these blind men here in Matthew chapter 9. They were blind for all of their lives! The first face that they saw was Jesus, their Messiah, in whom they had come to believe! No longer will they need a guide to help them walk. They can part ways with those who helped them walk to the home where Jesus entered. They can say for the first time, "I can find my own way home, thank you!"

It appears that they were excited about the great things that God had done for them, that they could not contain it in their mouths. They probably went home that night and spoke late into the night about what Jesus had done for them. The next day, they probably went to find their friends and again tell the story of Jesus and his healing power. There was no way that they were going to keep their mouths shut. Even a stern reproof from Jesus would not keep their news inside of them. Perhaps they went and told other blind people about their healing. Of the 16 healings in Matthew, only 5 remain for us to study, and three of those five deal with healing the blind. Verse 30 says, "And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See here, let no one know about this!'"

In verse 31, we see their disobedience to Jesus' words, "But they went out, and spread the news about Him in all that land." Their whole life had changed now that they could see! They went about actively spreading the news about Jesus! Jesus had given them sight and they wanted to tell others about it! We can hardly blame them. Perhaps this story is a rebuke to us. These men were told specifically not to speak, but they did speak. We are told to speak, but often we don't. Which is worse? How easy is it for the spectacular to be made normal? How easy is it for the thrill of our heart at one moment to become the common place and expected in another. How easy is it for us to forget the sense of wonder and awe of how our blind eyes have been made to see the Savior.

Perhaps today, I can remind you afresh at what God has done for you who believe. In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul explains how the gospel message works. Paul says that he was "Not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth [he was] commending [himself] to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2). Paul says that he puts the gospel out there in all of its fullness. He does not hide things from anybody. He does not twist it or distort it. He does not try to make it palatable for people to believe, only to explain it more fully later. This is a plague we face today. There are plenty of churches in America that soften the message of the gospel in hopes that it will become more palatable for people to believe. When churches do this, they adulterate the word of God. Do you really think that God sits in heaven, expressing His thanks to us, "Thanks for making it more believable"?

Paul knows full well that people will reject it. He says, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the

image of God" (2 Cor. 4:3-4). When you speak forth the gospel, you should know full well that some of the people who hear simply will not believe it. They will not believe it because their eyes are blinded to the truth. They have a veil over their eyes. But for those who believe, Paul writes that God "has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Why do we believe in the good news of Christ? We believe because God has removed the veil that Satan had used to blind our eyes. We believe because God has shone in our hearts to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. People believe in Christ because of the miraculous work of God in their hearts.

To the world, the message of sins forgiven through the work of another is foolishness. This is especially true in our culture that is ingrained with the American dream, where everyone is instructed from the youth up to "make something of yourself. Work hard and become independent. Your success is out there for you to achieve." The message that would achieve pardon from your sins through the hard work of another is viewed as folly. This is because the news that you can receive a righteousness that is not your own, but that is Christ's righteousness that is imputed to you, finds no place in darkened minds (Eph. 4:17). You believe the good news only because of the miraculous working of God in your heart. I would also contend that it is no less miraculous than what happened to these blind men who begged Jesus for sight.

Sometimes we can think of conversion as an intellectual change in the way of one's thinking. It is this, but it is so much more! God has removed a veil! God is shining in our hearts! God has caused us to be born again, as Peter said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy caused us to be born again to a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3). God has made us a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Just as we marvel at the creation of God, we also ought to marvel at the new creation of a hostile sinner, who is made to be submissive to the desires of God.

We ought to respond like these blind men and tell the world of what great things God has done for our souls.

Jesus not only gives sight to the blind. But He gives...

b. Speech to the Dumb

This miracle begins to unfold in verse 32:

And as they were going out, behold, a dumb man, demon-possessed, was brought to him. (Matt. 9:32)

This man is described with two characteristics: he is dumb (that is, he is unable to speak), and he is demon-possessed. A discussion arose at our house last night during our family worship time. We were talking about miracles and speaking in tongues. I mentioned to my children how I was going to preach from this passage today where a blind man receives sight and a dumb man speaks. My son thought that the mentioning of a "dumb" man meant that this man was stupid. However (for all of the children listening), this man was called, "dumb," simply because he couldn't speak. Something affected his ability to speak. We can assume that the man was dumb because he was demon-possessed. In other words, the demons prohibited this man from speaking.

This ought to demonstrate to us the complexity of demons. They manifest themselves in various ways. We saw at the end of chapter 8 how the men in Gadera were made crazy and uncontrollable by the demons. Yet, they could talk. When we look at Matthew 17, we will see that demons caused seizures to take place in attempt to destroy a boy by making him falling into fire or water (Matt. 17:15). In the narrative before us, the demon caused the man to be unable to speak. But this is no barrier to the wonder-working power of Jesus. Jesus cast the demon out. Verse 33 says that "after the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke." Just as the blind were made to see, so here is the dumb made to speak. This speaks of the power and the authority of Jesus. Likewise, my sermon this morning is entitled, "The Authority of Jesus Christ over Sight and Speech."

Let me ask you, why does Matthew tell us these stories? Let us take a look at another passage in Matthew:

Now when John in prison heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples, and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" (Matt. 11:2-3).

In Matthew 11, John was in prison because of his bold proclamation of righteousness. As he sat in prison and heard of the works of Jesus, he was confused. Before he was sent to prison, he had born witness that Jesus was "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He said of Jesus that he has a "higher rank than I" (John 1:30). He had testified that he saw "the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him" (John 1:32). He told others that Jesus is "the Son of God" (John 1:34). But, now, in prison, John was confused. Like Jesus' disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:21), and the rest of the Jews, John had believed that the Messiah would come to free Israel from its political bondage. Yet, the ministry of Jesus did not seem to square with his own Messianic expectations. So, he sent his messengers to ask Jesus, "Are You the Expected One?" He was asking Jesus whether or not Jesus was the Christ. Jesus replied to John's disciples,

"Go and report to John what you hear and see: [the] BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and [the] lame walk, [the] lepers are cleansed and [the] deaf hear, and [the] dead are raised up, and [the] POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me" (Matt. 11:4-6).

This is a great summary of Matthew 8 and 9. Indeed, I have written in my Bible beside these verses, "Summary of chapters 8 and 9." Every single one of these things Jesus describes takes place in Matthew 8 and 9. The blind receive sight (9:27-31). The lame walk (9:1-8). The lepers are cleansed (8:1-4). The deaf hear (9:32-33). The dead are raised up (9:18-26). The poor have the gospel preached to them (9:10-13). Chapters 8 and 9 have been written to demonstrate that Jesus is the "Expected One." They demonstrate that Jesus is the long awaited

Messiah. Jesus is the redeemer of Israel. His miracles bear witness to Himself.

If have learned anything over the 10 weeks that we have been looking at Matthew 8 and 9, I trust that it is this: Jesus has demonstrated His power and authority as Messiah! You can respond in one of several ways. You can either embrace Jesus, reject Jesus, or remain in the middle, undecided. Let us see the response of those who witnessed Jesus perform these miracles.

2. Two Responses (verses 33b-34)

The first response is that of the crowds.

a. The Multitudes Marveled

It says at the end of verse 33, "The multitudes marveled, saying, 'Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel.'" The multitudes marveled. They witnessed what Jesus had done and responded with wonder and amazement, with a touch of confusion in their minds. It is sort of like the experience of a week ago, as many of us watched footage of the space shuttle Columbia burn up as it reentered the atmosphere. We saw it burned up. We believed that it burned up. Yet there was something surreal about it. We began to think of the implications of what happened in our minds.

When Jesus calmed the storm (back in chapter 8), we are told that the disciples "marveled." They saw the raging storm calmed in an instant. They knew that the storm was stopped. They also saw the connection between the raging of the storm and the rebuke of Jesus. Yet they marveled, saying, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (8:27). When Jesus cursed the fig tree, the disciples marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" (Matt. 21:20).

So, when these people saw the things that Jesus did and were in amazement at Jesus' works, but were a touch confused. Though perhaps they did not understand everything, there was a wonder and awe that was directed toward Jesus. In Matthew 15:31, we are told that "the multitude marveled as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel." Yet, I am afraid that their glorifying of God was much like we hear from athletes today when something good happens in a ball-game. Perhaps they may "give glory to God," but the next day finds them far from God and lost in sin. Their praise is directed to God because of beneficial circumstances.

Likewise, these multitudes, who saw Jesus perform these miracles, did not whole-heartedly embrace Jesus. They gave glory to God when they saw these miracles. But their praise to God came simply because something good has happened. The people who saw these miracles performed still had an apprehension in them. They still remained somewhat confused and at a distance from Him. To these same people, Jesus will curse, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ... And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day" (Matt. 11:21, 23).

During the past several months. We have read of the authority of Jesus Christ over disease, disciples, nature, demons, sight, sin and death. These accounts of Jesus' miracles ought to cause us to marvel at Jesus. We have not witnessed this firsthand, but I have labored to make these miracles as alive to you as I know how. We should wonder at the power of Jesus upon the earth. We should realize that He sits today enthroned in heaven with all the power that He ever had while on earth.

The multitudes marveled, but...

b. The Pharisees Blasphemed

In verse 24 we read, "But the Pharisees were saying, 'He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.'" These religious leaders ascribed to Jesus the power of Satan. Later in chapter 12, we will see them making this same accusation: "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons" (Matt. 12:24). When we reach that point in our study of Matthew, we will look further on Jesus' response to such charges of blasphemy. He will tell them that their sin of witnessing first-hand the authority and power of Jesus and calling it "the work of Satan," is so bad that it can never be forgiven (Matt. 12:31). Such was the response of the Pharisees. They blasphemed Jesus.

How will you respond? I don't believe that the majority of you are in danger of being like the Pharisees. Your consistent church attendance demonstrates that you do not hate Jesus. But we are in danger of being like the multitudes, marveling at Jesus from a distance, but never embracing Him totally.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 9, 2003 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
