Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Miracles of Sight and Sound
Scripture: Matthew 9:27-33
Code: 2267

In the study of the Word of God, which is our great opportunity and privilege this morning, we are drawn to the 9th chapter of Matthew. Matthew, chapter 9. I confess to you that it's a joy every week when I can set aside the time and get involved in the study of this tremendous gospel. I anticipate it. I love it. It feeds my heart and soul, and then the double privilege of coming to you and sharing its contents is a great joy. But I have to admit, if no one came and there was no sermon to preach, the study itself would be worth all of the effort for the richness that it conveys of the person of Jesus Christ. Now, we're looking in Matthew 9, and, for this morning, I want us to examine verses 27 through the first part of verse 33. Matthew 9:27, through 33. We've entitled the section "Miracles of Sight and Sound."

When God created man, He gave him dominion over the earth. Adam was king of the earth. He had the right to rule, to name the animals, to dominate the created order. He was king, and his kingdom was an incredibly wondrous and amazing creation of the incomparable infinite mind of God: a kingdom of light, a kingdom of glory, a kingdom of wonder and beauty. But man sinned and he lost his crown. He lost his dominion. The kingdom of light became replaced by a kingdom of darkness on this earth. Man's dominion was usurped by Satan; and because of this usurpation, and because of the kingdom of darkness, there were to be tears, pain, sorrow, sweat, grief, illness, injury, suffering, decay, quarreling, fighting, war, chaos, murder, lying, and, ultimately, death. And that's how it's been for man in his world, in his life. But almost as instantly as man fell did God promise that He would someday restore the kingdom. Someday, man would again be the king of the earth. Someday, the dominion would be taken from Satan. Someday, the kingdom of darkness would end and the kingdom of light, of glory would return; someday and forever.

In fact, in Genesis, chapter 3, no sooner had man fallen than God gave the promise that there would come One who would be called the Seed of the woman; and that very One would bruise the serpent's head. And so from that time on, the Old Testament was filled with promises that God would bring a Deliverer, that God would bring a King, and that that King would restore the kingdom, would establish again the rule of God, would wipe out disease and death and pain and illness and sorrow and war and fighting. And the prophets would again and again and again repeat that He's coming: the Anointed Son, the King of kings, the Satan-Conqueror, the Death-Defeater, the Sin-Destroyer, the Healer. The Jews know Him as the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Prophet, Priest, and King surpassing all others. "Someday," says the Old Testament, "He'll come. Someday He'll establish His throne. Someday it'll be as God intended it to be in the world."

Matthew's purpose in writing is to tell us: that Jesus is that Messiah; that that someday has arrived; that Christ is the promised King; that He is the One who can right the wrongs, who can reverse the curse, who can establish the kingdom, who can destroy the enemy. He is the One. And in order to convince us that Christ has the power to do that, in chapters 8 and 9, Matthew marks His miracle power, and he doesn't do it in a random manner. He marks His miracle power, I believe, insofar as it is associated with Old Testament prophecy. There were many miracles that Jesus did—Matthew selects nine of them in chapters 8 and 9, three sets of three—and, in these miracles, I see the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. And Matthew was saying, "This is the Messiah. He fulfills the prophecy. The prophecy says He will do all of this in the kingdom, and He has given you a preview of it all." The kingdom will evidence His power over disease, His power over death, His power over the elements, His power over the earth; and in His first coming, He gave previews of all of those. Now remember that of the nine miracles, the first three deal with disease, the second three deal with disorder, and the third primarily with death. And there's some overlap, but that's just kind of a general focus.

Now, think back with me. You remember when we began chapter 8, the first three miracles had to do with healing diseases. Now let me put this in context for you. The prophet Isaiah said, in chapter 33, verses 22 to 24—don't need to look it up, just listen as I go through some of these prophecies very rapidly. The prophet said, in speaking of the coming kingdom, “The Lord is our King; He will save us,...and the inhabitant shall not say, 'I am sick.'" In other words, it will be true of the eternal kingdom of Christ that there will be no sickness. In Isaiah 57:19, the prophet again says that in the kingdom, there will be “'peace to him that is far off and to him that is near,' saith the Lord, 'and I will heal him.'" So that the Jew anticipated that the Messiah would bring the end of disease in His glorious kingdom. As there was no disease before the Fall, there will be no disease after the restoration. Now, if Jesus Christ is the One who has the power to do that, He must be able to demonstrate such power, and that is why Matthew shows us that He has power over disease.

Secondly, the next three miracles that we saw in chapter 9 deal with His power over disorder. Now, the disorder in the physical world, disorder in the spiritual world relative to demons, and disorder in the moral world relative to sin. If you are to read the prophet Isaiah, particularly in chapter 35, you will read, for example, in dealing with the physical world, that when the kingdom comes, the Messiah will change the earth. The desert will blossom like a what? Like a rose. And rivers and streams will appear in the desert. The topography will change. The geography will change as He deals with the physical and the natural elements. If the Messiah is to do that, He must demonstrate such power. That is why, in chapter 8, Matthew points to the miracle of Jesus stilling the wind and the waves as evidence of His power over the physical world.

Also, in the area of disorder, the Messiah is going to come to defeat Satan and his demons. Daniel 9, Daniel 10, and Daniel 11 talk about this conflict and this interplay between holy angels and fallen

demons; and talk about how, in the end, God and His angels will be victorious. And if Jesus is to be able to do that in the end, He must demonstrate such power. And so Matthew picks out the miracle in which Jesus cast out the most number of demons, a legion of demons out of the maniac of Gadara as demonstration of His power to do so in the kingdom.

And the third area of disorder was the moral disorder, sin, and so the Lord is pictured in chapter 9, verses 1 to 8 casting out sin. Why? Because it says in Isaiah 33:24 that in the kingdom they “shall be forgiven all their iniquity." Now, the Messiah must forgive iniquity, conquer demons. He must deal with the physical world and heal diseases. And if Jesus is to make the claim to be the Messiah, He has to prove it; and so Matthew carefully selects these miracles for that affirmation.

The third set of miracles—and the ones we're looking at now— deal primarily with His power over death. And there are some attendant miracles to that, but the major one we've been looking at is in verses 18 to 26. We went over it last week. He raises Jairus' daughter from the dead. Now, this is precisely what Isaiah 65 says: The Messiah will have power to lengthen life. And Daniel 12:2 says He will have power to raise the dead. And if Jesus is the Messiah, then He must demonstrate that power, and that is precisely what He did in raising Jairus' daughter from the grave.

He not only has power over dead people, but even over the dead factors of a living human being, such as their eyes and their ears and their tongues; and that is demonstrated in our passage today. And let me read you two Old Testament prophecies. The first is in Isaiah 29:18; and you might look at it. Isaiah 29:18. It speaks directly to our message today, and it's speaking of the kingdom and the coming day when Messiah arrives, and it says, "And in that day [Now, listen.] shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." And then chapter 35, verses 5 and 6 of Isaiah, when the kingdom comes, “Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart [or as a deer], and the tongue of the dumb will sing." So the Old Testament said that the deaf would hear and the dumb would speak and the blind would see and the lame would walk, that the Messiah would give back life to dead faculties. Miracles of sight and sound, and that is precisely what you have in verses 27 to 33 of Matthew 9, another affirmation, another demonstration of the fact that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah, for He fulfills them explicitly.

Now, may I just add a footnote. The more you study the New Testament, the more apparent it becomes to you that Jesus, in His first coming, put on a literally dazzling display of previews of what was to come in His kingdom. For example, when He was taken into the mount and transfigured, He pulled His flesh back and showed them His glory. There was, in a microcosm, or in a small view, what would happen at His Second Coming. Later on, when, on the Day of Pentecost, they were all filled with the Spirit and began to speak in other languages, it was stated, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel." In other words, this was a sample of what was ultimately to come in the fullness of the final form of His glorious kingdom; so that His life became a series of glimpses of the ultimate

power to be demonstrated when He established His eternal rule in the earth and in the new heaven and the new earth. Matthew does not select these miracles randomly. He doesn't throw them in just because he liked the story. They are explicitly there to give us the full range of prophetic fulfillment and affirm to us that Jesus is none other than the promised Messiah.

And now we come to the miracles of sight and sound. Look at verse 27: "And when Jesus departed from there." You can stop right there. From where? Simply from the house of Jairus, the neighborhood of Jairus, same day; it's evening by now. A busy day raising the dead, healing the woman with an issue of blood, perhaps engaging in dialogue with the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees. A busy, busy day. Evening, He leaves the house of Jairus. And, remember, there's a mass of humanity crushing around Him. He has two crowds, really: the crowd that's been following Him all along, the crowd that pushed their way through the little narrow streets of Capernaum all the way to the house of Jairus, the crowd that was there when he healed the woman with the issue of blood, the crowd that is looking for His miracles, that is fascinated by Him. And now another crowd has been added; and that's the crowd of mourners and paid musicians, flute players, and weeping women who were holding the funeral service for the daughter. The funeral was broken up when He raised her from the dead. And now He has this whole collection of humanity; and He moves from that place back toward the house in which He was staying; and as He does, the story unfolds. And I want us to work our way through the story with just a simple little outline; and I want you to see this wonderful, wonderful miracle that the Lord does.

First of all, we're going to talk about the healing of two blind men; and the first thing we want to note is the condition of the men, the condition of the men, in verse 27. It says that when Jesus left the house of Jairus and his neighborhood, “two blind men followed Him." Blindness was a common malady, a common disorder in Egypt, in the Arabian countries, and in Israel. In fact, the gospel records include more healings of blind people than any other type of healing. That may indicate its commonness. Poverty and the unsanitary conditions that went with it, brilliant sunlight, excessive heat, blowing sand, accidents, war, infectious organisms. All of those things contributed to blindness. Many of the people were blind from birth; and, very commonly, their blindness from birth was caused by a form of gonorrhea. Sometimes it was not even known to be existing in the mother; and, yet, when the little baby passed from the uterus down, those particular germs that lodged in that mother's womb would find their lodging in the conjunctiva of the eye; and, as they did, they would begin to multiply; and within only three days, the child would be permanently blind. That is why, today, antiseptic drops are put in the eyes of a newborn baby; and for all intents and purposes, we have eliminated that problem.

That may also have been what was in the mind of the question on the heart of the disciples in John 9:2, when they saw the man born blind and they said, "Who sinned? Did this man or his parents?" There may have been a theology in that question, but there also may have been a little bit of medicine in that question, or a little bit of the physical. They may have been saying, "Is he blind because of his parents’ sin?" Because very often venereal disease contracted in a sinful situation was

the cause of a child's blindness. So that was a common thing for people born blind. There were also infective organisms and viruses that were the common cause of trachoma. Sulfa drugs have pretty well eliminated that nowadays. But all of these things created the problem of blindness, and it seemed to be a, a major problem, and blind people hung around together. It was not uncommon to see a couple of blind people hanging onto each other; and, thus, did our Lord say to the Pharisees on one occasion, "You're like the blind leading the blind. You both fall in the ditch."

So we see the condition of the men. Secondly, we see the cry of the men. This is a very important point. The two men followed Him. They're in the crowd shoving their way along, trying to stay with the group in their blindness, pushing and pressing along with everybody else as they leave the neighborhood of Jairus. And they're crying out, and they're also saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" Now they're, they're bold. They're not shy and retiring, slinking in a corner. They're shoving their way along and crying out. No doubt they had heard of Jesus. No doubt they were part of the crowd at Jairus' house and must have been aware of the resurrection.

And I would just stop to add a note here. It is always the brokenhearted. It is always the bereft. It is always the hurting, the unfit, the outcasts, the discouraged, the sorrowing, the lonely, the sinful, the guilty; who follow Jesus. You never find the self-sufficient people. You never find the people who think they have the resources. You never find the people who don't really have any questions. I talked to a man this week, and I said to him, "You, I can introduce you to Christ. I can talk to you about Christ. I can tell you about Christ if you really want to know." He said, "I don't want to know. I don't have any need for that." The thing to do in that situation is pray that God'll bring him to the place where he has a desperate need, because it's only desperate people who come.

Now, this man and his friend were crying, and the word is an interesting word. It is a word that has a broad range of possible interpretation, but the word basically means to yell or to scream or to shriek; and in the Gospels it is used of an insane person who is just screaming and shrieking unintelligible babbling. It is used of an epileptic. It is used in Mark 5 of the maniac of Gadara who was demon-possessed and was screaming and shrieking and yelling. It is used in Mark 15 of our Lord on the cross; and it says, "He cried out and gave up His Spirit." It is used in Revelation 12:2 of a woman who is screaming the pains of childbirth. It is a word that doesn't necessarily have to refer to intelligent speech, intelligent verbalization. It may be the unintelligible crying in, in agony that we see in those illustrations. And it interests me that it says they were not only shrieking and screaming and crying, but they were, interspersed with that, actually saying some intelligible things, such as, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" But it wasn't a, a calculated, cold, pedantic, academic kind of thing. They were crying out in agony and desperation and deep need and shrieking, pleading, begging. That is the desperation of which regeneration is made.

Now, in addition to their crying and shrieking, and mingled with it, they were saying this. Look at verse 27 again; very important statement. They were saying, "Son of David. Son of David." Now, why did

they say that? Why did they call Jesus of Nazareth Son of David? Did they know His lineage from Joseph, who was of the line of David? Did they know His lineage from Mary, who also, according to Luke 3, I believe, was of the lineage of David? Well, I'm not sure they knew that. What did they know? The term Son of David was the common Jewish designation for the Messiah. That was the common Jewish title for the Messiah: Son of David. Matthew knew that that was the point of Jewish recognition. That's why, in the first chapter and the first verse of Matthew's gospel he begins that way. He writes, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David." What is that? That is a Messianic affirmation. He is the Promised One; and in that title, Son of David, is all of the concept of dominion and royalty and kingship that the prophets spoke of. You see, the Old Testament said that the Messiah would, first of all, be the Seed of a woman. That is a man, a human being. The Messiah would be the Seed of a woman; a virgin woman, but, nonetheless, a human.

And then, so God was going to redeem man through man. But then from all of the men that He could've chosen, He narrowed it down in Genesis 22, and said not just the Seed of the woman, but the Seed of the woman and then the Seed of Abraham. And He narrowed it down even yet to Abraham. And of all of those who came out of Abraham, not just any, but the Seed of Judah, and of all of those who came out of the loins of Judah (Genesis 49:10), He said, I'll narrow it down again to the Seed of David. So the Messiah came through man, through Abraham, through Judah, finally, through David. And that's why in 2 Samuel 7 you have that very important statement in verse 12 where the promise of God is given to David: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy Seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy own body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son." And that was not fulfilled in Solomon. That is Christ, Son of David, and every Jew knew how to interpret 2 Samuel 7. He knew that, ultimately, there would come a Son of David.

In Luke chapter 1, the Bible tells us in verse 32 that the angel said, "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David." In verse 69, "And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David." Chapter 2, verse 4, it says, "Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David; because he was of the house and lineage of David." And in Acts chapter 2, it identifies Christ as the fulfillment of the promise to David; and Paul does it in his epistles; and John does it in the Revelation. Again and again, Christ is called the Son of David.

Look with me for just a moment at a couple of Scriptures that I think are most important. Matthew 21:9: and I want this to be firmly in your mind; and here you have the time when Jesus made His triumphal entry into the city. And the multitude was hailing and praising Him, throwing palm branches down at His feet; and they were crying. Verse 9: "The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'" Then they were saying, “Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" They were saying this is the Messiah. Hosanna

means to *save now*. That He is coming in the Lord's name, and that He is representative of the highest. Was God Himself. So the very crowd, and, by the way, they were somewhat fickle, yet were giving to Jesus Messianic titles; and of those Messianic titles, none is more direct than the title Son of David. Go over to chapter 22 of Matthew. What I'm saying is even the fickle crowd knew that the Son of David was the right title for the Messiah; not only that, so did the Pharisees who never did believe in Christ. In Matthew 22, the Pharisees were gathered. Jesus asked them saying, "What do you think of Christ [or Messiah]? Whose Son is he?" And the Pharisees said, "The Son of David." In other words, and you can go back to Matthew 9 now, the Pharisees, the fickle crowd, everybody knew that the Son of David was a title by which the Messiah Himself was designated.

Now when these two blind men came in verse 27 and said, "Son of David," I believe they are affirming beyond doubt that they believe this is the long-awaited Messiah. This is the rightful Heir, the King of Israel; and perhaps they have well recalled Isaiah 35, that He would heal the blind when He came. And, by the way, you have to remember that John the Baptist had had a far-reaching and effective ministry; and his ministry was to heighten the anticipation of the coming of Messiah; and in the light of that heightened anticipation, the people of this time were living in expectation; and when Jesus came along and could do the things that He could do, even to the point of raising the dead, it became apparent to some, including these two, that this was One who did fulfill their expectation; and so they give Him the Messianic title.

You say, "Well, so did the fickle crowd." Right, and we're going to have to wait a while to see if they're more genuine than the fickle crowd was. But they also cry something else that helps us know a little about their genuineness. They said, "Son of David, have [What?] mercy on us!" To go with their knowledge, they also had a right attitude. They felt a deep need, and I believe that they felt a spiritual need as deep as they felt a physical one, or probably much deeper. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah. They believed, from what they had experienced, that He had the power to bring the kingdom blessings. And, yet, they knew that they were undeserving, and that is why they asked for mercy. And that is something you will never hear a Pharisee ask for, because they were self-sufficient. They thought they did everything God expected. They thought they had earned everything God had to give. Therefore, there was no mercy. You see, mercy is giving you what you don't deserve and can't earn or withholding from you what you do deserve.

You remember the Pharisee in Luke 18 who went in the temple to pray, and said, "I thank Thee that I'm not like other men. I do everything I'm supposed to do. I give, and I tithe, and I pray, and I fast, and I do all these things." And the man in the corner beat on his breast and said, "Lord, be merciful to me a [What?] a sinner." And Jesus said, "That man went home justified rather than the other." The Pharisee never asked mercy, because he never thought he needed it. But these two came with, not only a right understanding of who Christ was, but a right understanding of how unworthy they were. They sought mercy. They came to the right person. They really did. He was so merciful.

In the book I wrote on *Kingdom Living*, which is the only book I ever wrote that I read over and over again, because the beatitudes just wash out my heart, there's a section I put in there on how merciful the Lord was. And it just kind of spoke to my heart again. Let me just read you a couple of lines from it:

“He was the most merciful human being who ever lived. He reached out to the sick and healed them. He reached out to the crippled and gave them legs to walk. He healed the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, and the mouths of the dumb. He found prostitutes and tax collectors and those who were debauched and drunken, and drew them into the circle of His love and redeemed them and set them on their feet. He took the lonely and made them feel loved. He took little children and gathered them into His arms and loved them. Never was there a person on the face of the earth with the mercy of this One. Once a funeral procession came by, and He saw a mother weeping because her son was dead. She was already a widow, and now she had no child to care for her. Who would care? Jesus stopped the funeral procession, put His hand on the casket, and raised the child from the dead, because He cared."

Well, that's, that's the Lord: Merciful. Hebrews 2:17 says He was made like His brethren in all things that He might become a merciful, faithful high priest. Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us according to His mercy." Ephesians 2 says, "He's rich in mercy." Daniel 9 says, "To the Lord, our God, belong mercies and forgivenesses." And in Lamentations, it says (the most beautiful of all the mercy passages): "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." He is a God of mercy. He has mercy for healing, mercy for saving, and it was available to these two desperate men. So they follow along. They had the right knowledge. They had a right attitude. Screaming that they believed He was Messiah and begging and pleading that He extend to them the mercy that they really didn't even deserve. And what is interesting to me is that Jesus pays no attention to them. None at all. He lets them just keep pouring out their heart and pouring out their heart, persistently manifesting their genuineness as a way of pulling them out from the fickle and the, and the passing, from the superficial. If the faith is real, they will persist. They will not turn around until He heals them. They'll follow Him, and so He tests the faith. He makes it run to its extremity to prove its genuineness. So we see the condition of the cry.

Thirdly, the confrontation, in verse 28: Finally, He responds to them. But look what happens. "And when He was come into the house," not just any house, but the house. What house? I don't know what house, but the house, which probably means the house that He stayed in. What house did He stay in? I'm not sure, but I think it might have been Peter's house in Capernaum. They're still in the city of Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee; and they were going back there. He was going home is where He was going. He was going back to the place where He stayed. He, He had a house, perhaps Peter's house, in Galilee. He had a house in Judah. That was the house of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, and that's as close as He ever came to having a house of His own. And He

finally got home, and it had been a busy day of, of teaching and preaching and healing and walking and, and dealing with a mass of humanity, and He went in the house. And look what it says, "And the two blind men came to Him." And I'm struck by the utter lack of privacy that our Lord had: the relentless pressure, the, the barrage of unrelenting people who dogged His footsteps. He went in the house, and they went right in the house after Him. I don't think any of us can even begin to fathom what it must have been like to have these tragic people just clinging to Him all through His ministry, knowing no moments of privacy, unless late in the night He were to go away to some private place of prayer.

Finally, in the house, He can't avoid them, and there's an important truth here, people. Every one of the healings we've seen in this chapter involves persistence, and that is how Jesus drew out true faith. That's why all the healings we see so far are not only physical healings, but spiritual conversions, as well, because He pulls their faith so far. The paralytic, his friends, in order to get him healed, had to literally tear the roof apart. That's persistence. They didn't say, "Hey, it's crowded in there. Charlie, let's come back another day." No, they took the roof apart. And the ruler said, "My daughter is dead," and Jesus started down there. And He stopped, and all the crowd was there, and He healed a woman with an issue of blood, and He talked with her, and you can imagine that the ruler is really concerned and anxious. His daughter is dead, and time is passing, and Jesus has this interlude going. And then there was the woman of the issue of blood who grabbed His tassel, and He didn't let it go at that. He said, "Who touched Me?" And He drew her out and had a little dialogue with her. He made her affirm her faith, and here He makes these blind men follow Him all the way to the house, and in the house, before He turns to them.

"And Jesus said to them [verse 28] 'Believe ye that I'm able to do this?'" Now, you say, "That's a funny question. Do we believe you're able to do this? Man, we've been poking our way through this crowd clear here. If we didn't believe, you'd say, why does He ask that?" Well, I don't think the purpose of the question was to deny their faith, that He was the Messiah, which they had affirmed in the statement, "Son of David." I don't even think it was to question whether or not they believed that He had the power to do it. He knew they believed that. I believe that why He asked them was, first of all, to hear the affirmation of their faith in their own confession. Apostle Paul said, "If you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, [you] and believe in your heart that God had raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." And I believe He is drawing out a verbal confession, an affirmation of that faith. They might have said, "Well, we, we think He might." But He wants to affirm the genuineness of their faith, that it might stand as a testimony to what is necessary for genuine conversion. He said, "Do you believe I'm able to do this?" And they said, "Yes [What?] Lord."

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as [What?] Lord." That was the affirmation of their faith; and I believe, too, that He wanted to separate them from those who were looking for a political deliverer. And He's really saying, "Do you believe that I'm here as One who is expressive of divine power, not just a political leader? Not just a man with charisma, not just a competent human being,

but do you believe that I represent the power of God to heal your blindness? That I am here as an emissary of God Himself, that My Kingdom is divine and are willing to affirm My Lordship?"

Now, as I've said before, faith is not necessary for healing. The gospels are loaded with times that Jesus healed, and people didn't have any faith. Doesn't say a word about whether they had faith. But faith is necessary for conversion, and He wanted to bring these men all the way that their faith would take them. And when a man says, "I need mercy," and when a man says, "You are the promised Messiah," and a man says, "I believe You have the divine power of God," and a man says, "Yes," and uses the title “Lord,” that is a consummate saving faith. And Jesus was drawing them to that. And I believe when they said, "Yes, Lord," although Lord could mean just a term of dignity, *sir*, or something, I believe in this case, because of all of the attendant things, that it had all the meaning it could possibly have. I believe it was filled with all the awe and the reverence that they could possibly put in it. I believe it filled, it was filled with love and adoration and worship and submission and devotion. It was a saving affirmation. "Yes, Lord."

So we move from that to, fourthly, the conversion of the men. We saw their condition. They were blind. Their cry, "Son of David, have mercy!" The confrontation, "Do you believe?" "Yes, Lord." And now, the conversion: and I believe we have to use that word, because it's bigger than a healing. Verse 29, "Then touched He their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith, be it unto you.' And their eyes were opened." And I believe they not only had their physical eyes opened, but, at that moment, the flower of faith burst into full bloom, and they became children of God.

So often Jesus touched people. So often He expresses the divine tenderness. He touched their eyes. So simple. I love that. There's no fanfare. He doesn't say, "Now back up, because the power's going to fly any minute." Doesn't get on a big rock and say, "See!" You know? Doesn't. You don't need to expend a lot of energy when You're God and all You've got is a couple of blind fellows. The One who could raise all the dead who've ever died from all the graves that have ever been dug can certainly handle a couple of blind fellows. All He does is touch their eyes. In verse 30, it says, "They're eyes were opened." In the aorist tense, states the instant astounding fact, the unimaginable joy, as sight burst into their conscious. And notice the phrase at the end of verse 29: "According to your faith, be it unto you." What do you mean, "According to your faith?" Well, how much faith did they have? Did they have enough faith to be healed? Yes. Did they have enough faith to be saved? Yes. If they had enough faith to be saved, that's what they've got, because it was according to their faith that they received. I don't think faith is the issue in the healing. I think faith is the issue in the saving. "Your faith is big enough to encompass redemption, so be it unto you." That was where their faith was. You know, faith, in itself, is nothing. Did you know that? It's nothing.

Archbishop Trench in 1902 wrote this. I think it's a marvelous thing. He was writing on this very same account in Matthew, and he said this:

"The faith which, in itself, is nothing is yet the organ for receiving everything. Now listen to this. It is the conducting link between man's emptiness and God's fullness; and herein lies all the value faith has [now listen]. Faith is the bucket let down into the fountain of God's grace without which the man could never draw water of life from the wells of salvation. For the wells are deep and, of himself, man has nothing to draw with. Faith is the purse which cannot of itself make its owner rich, and yet effectually enriches by the wealth which it contains."

That's a great statement about faith. Faith is the bucket that dips into the wells of salvation. Faith is the purse which, in itself, is not the riches, but contains the riches. It is that by which we receive what God graciously gives, and He says, “Your purse is big enough to receive all that I have to give. Your bucket is big enough to gather the waters of the wells of salvation.”

"'According to your faith, be it unto you.' And their eyes were opened." What an incredible thing. Yes, He has the power to give sight; and He has the power to save. We see the condition, the cry, confrontation, conversion. Now listen to the command that He gives them in verse 30. "And Jesus strictly charged them, saying, 'See that no man know.'" Oh, my. Oh, that's terrible. “See that no man know.” How we going to do that? Going to go around with our eyes closed bumping into things just to pretend? The people who know us are going to know. What is He saying here? Well, He's very serious. It says, "He strictly charged them," and, by the way, that is a very, very strong verb. It is even used of the snorting of a horse. He really let it out. "Don't let anyone know." Has the idea of scolding someone in Mark 14:5. Now, why? Some people say, "Well, He wants to hide the fact that He's a miracle worker." Well, of course, He didn't want to hide that. He was doing them in public. That isn't the reason. "Well, He didn't want anyone to find out at all." That can't be true, either, because of his friends and relatives are going to find out immediately, weren't they? He's going to walk in, and he's going to be able to see.

So there must be something bigger, something different than that. It isn't that He wanted to hide His miracles, or He wouldn't have done them in public. And it isn't that He doesn't want anybody to know, because everybody who's around this man is going to know. Why did He tell him then not to spread this everywhere? Let me tell you why I think He did. First of all, the proclamation that the blind men had made was, “Son of David,” and that was a Messianic title; and going around proclaiming Jesus as Messiah, Son of David, Heir to the throne, could really create some problems. First of all, the Jews wouldn't understand it, because He didn't come through the Jewish establishment; and, secondly, the Romans wouldn't understand it either, because Caesar was the king. And, ultimately, if you know the story of Christ, it was that very affirmation that He was the King that brought Him to the cross; and what He's saying now is, "It's not the time to start that thing going yet." God is on a divine timetable. Secondly, people had a tendency to see Him, when they heard about these things, just as a miracle worker, which gave a kind of a dangerous and needless publicity.

You remember back in John 6 when they saw Him feed the, the 5,000, they immediately wanted to make Him the king? And later on it says that Jesus said to them after they followed Him all over, "You don't come after Me because of what I say, but because you want free food." So He had to deal with the problem of them trying to make Him a king; and He also had to deal with the problem of the publicity that brought about reprisals. He said, "It's not the time for that, so just don't get that started." It wasn't until the 10th chapter that He really began to send His apostles forth with the right message; and He didn't want somebody going off half-cocked with a confused message, somebody who was as new as these two fellows. "Let's get it straight, and we'll send out our official ambassadors."

And I believe, thirdly, I think He still wanted people to conclude things for themselves. I think He still wanted people not to hear about Him by hearsay, but to come and see for themselves rather than make judgments. And if these men went beyond the circle of the people who knew them and started broadcasting it, people would say, "Well, how do we know you were really blind? We don't believe that. We don't buy that." It might be better if the people came themselves and examined before they made such a conclusion.

So those are basically some thoughts about the reason. He didn't want a fickle, premature movement to enthrone Him as a king. He didn't want a whole lot of people following Him who were unrepentant and didn't understand the kingdom, just looking for a circus atmosphere. He didn't want to start a revolutionary uprising on behalf of Himself at the wrong place and the wrong time. So He says, "Don't say anything—-and I mean this. Don't say anything." Very stern. You know what they did? Verse 31. "And when they departed, they spread abroad His fame in all that country." Exactly what He told them not to do. Well, it's understandable. I mean if you'd been blind and now you can see, you would have a tendency to tell folks, get excited about it. Most of us, the Lord wants us to say things, and we don't. But there are times when He doesn't want us to say things, and we do. I guess it's a sin that only a grateful heart could commit, but it's nonetheless a sin; and so I call it the contrariness of the men. The contrariness of the men. They were commanded, but they were contrary to the command.

Doesn't end there. I'm so glad it doesn't. I can't stop at verse 31. By the way, next week we'll cover verse 31 in another context; but I want to go on to verse 32. The story doesn't end there. You have the condition: They were blind. The cry: "Son of David! Have mercy!" The confrontation: "Do you believe?" The conversion: "According to your faith." The command, "Don't say it." The contrariness: They said it everywhere. And, finally, the commitment: The commitment of the men. We might doubt whether they were genuinely children of God if all they did was run out and disobey immediately, but I want to show you something else they did. Verse 32, "As they went out [They now can see, and they go out of the house.], behold [or, *Look!* or *How amazing*!], they brought to Him a dumb man." And the word is *koufos*. It is translated in Matthew 11:5 as *deaf*. It probably means deaf and dumb.

Now, this would have been one of their friends. They were blind, he was deaf and dumb; and together they made a whole person. See? And they immediately went out, and they got hold of their friend, "possessed with a demon, and they brought him in." This is the commitment of the men. One of their fellow beggars. Deafness was very common. Infection in the middle ear and the inner ear, congenital defects. They even had a major problem with deafness, according to some writers, over the fact that blowing sand collected on the earwax, because they didn't have proper cleaning; and they would lax, actually become deaf in such a simple way as that. And, and, yet, with this man, it wasn't any of those things. His deafness and his mutism is specifically identified in verse 32. He was possessed with a demon. He had demon-deafness and demon-dumbness. It is possible, as we see from Scripture, that demons can affect people in a physical way. They had so affected this man; but our Lord has power over that kingdom, too.

And so we find in verse 33, "And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke." Doesn't even tell us how the Lord did it. Again, there's no fanfare about the power because there's so much of it. It's a simple thing for Him. He cast the demon out, and the man could speak. Now, listen, it says nothing about the man's faith. We don't know if he knew what was going on. The, He, He just says, "Heal," that's all. There's nothing about his faith, nothing about his salvation; but what we do find is that the two blind men immediately become useful to Christ because they are involved in bringing others to Him. I'm glad the story ends that way. Yes, they were weak and disobedient; but they also were committed enough to bring a fellow beggar to Christ.

Now, listen, I'm going to close, and I want you to listen carefully. Simple story; but I think it's one of the most beautiful analogies of salvation in all of Matthew's gospel. Their blindness becomes an analogy of spiritual blindness. Being lost and blinded by sin; and you can flow right through that story just as if it were an analogy of salvation. Now, listen, first of all, they had a need. They were blind, and they knew that. That's where salvation begins. Nobody comes to God unless he senses a need, unless he knows he cannot see. He's blind. He has no resources. He has no hope. He cannot discern the truth. There's a sense of desperation.

Need is then followed by knowledge. They found out who Jesus was; and they knew that He was the Deliverer, the Messiah, the Son of David. Their knowledge was right. Out of their need came their knowledge. They sought to know, and they found the truth. That's how salvation comes about. First, there's a deep need, and out of the deep need comes a searching for the right answer. And then that is followed by a sense of sinfulness. They said, "Have mercy. We're not here to tell You we deserve anything. We're here to tell You we need something that we don't deserve." And that's how salvation is. You come with a, a cry for mercy.

Fourthly, there was faith. They said, "Yes, Lord, we followed You persistently, crying to You. Doesn't that evidence our faith?" Pursuing. The Old Testament says, "If you seek Me with all your [What?] heart, you'll find Me." So salvation begins with a need, the knowledge of the solution, a sense of

sinfulness that you don't deserve the solution, faith that persists in reaching out, and then comes confession. "Do you believe?" "Yes, Lord," the affirmation of the lordship. Submission, devotion, love: "Yes, Lord, we believe." And then comes conversion: "According to your faith, be it unto to." And you know what often follows conversion? Weakness. That's right. Disobedience. Why? Because when you're born again, you are a newborn babe in Christ, right? And babes don't know how to discern. They can be tossed to and fro. They don't know the deep things of God, and there's a certain weakness there, a certain susceptibility to disobedience. Sometimes even in their zeal, they are disobedient.

But, finally, the story ends with usefulness. In mingled, intermingled with their disobedience was their desire to bring somebody else to Jesus Christ. That is so often true of a new Christian. They don't know all that's involved. They just grab the nearest deaf and dumb guy and drag him in, say, "Here, Lord." And I don't think the Lord healed that man because of that man's faith. Doesn't say that. I think He healed the man to show those two blind men that they were going to be useful to Him in the advance of His kingdom.

So it's a beautiful picture of how salvation occurs in a life. Jesus is the Messiah, people. If you haven't yet come to that, you are living in opposition to all the evidence. If you've not yet come to the conversion that we've seen in the lives of these men, you are yet in the darkness and blindness of your sin and needlessly so, for Christ offers Himself as the One who dispels the darkness.

George Lansing Taylor wrote this:

Oh, Savior, we are blind and dumb.
To Thee for sight and speech we come.
Touch Thou our eyes with truth's bright rays.
Teach Thou our lips to sing Thy praise.
Help us to feel our mournful night,
And seek through all things for Thy light,
Till the glad sentence we receive,
'Be it to you as you believe.'
Then swift the dumb to Thee we'll bring,
Till all, Thy grace, shall see and sing."

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for our time this morning in examining this wonderful story. Thank you that someday, as we enter into Your eternal presence, we'll have the privilege of meeting these two men that You redeemed that day. Thank You that You wait just the same for every sinner who senses a need, who knows he's unworthy, who knows You're the answer, who persists in faith, who confesses openly. You're waiting to convert them, and then, even in their weakness, to use them for the advance of your kingdom. Lord, thank You for all that You've done in us, and all that You've

been able to do through us by Your Spirit. Father, we pray that You'll draw to the prayer room those that You would desire to come. Thank You for Your Word to us today. Bring us together tonight again, Lord, in the wonder of the beginning of the book of Romans, as we look at the man You used so mightily to write that book and so many others. Prepare our hearts even for that tonight. Give us a great day, because we are obedient to Your Word and Your will. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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