

Never Have We Seen Anything Like This

Jesus' Authority Over Blindness and Silence

Scripture: Matthew 9:27-34

Sermon Series: Matthew

Topic: Jesus, Miracles, Authority, Messiah

Matthew 9:27-34 (ESV)

²⁷ And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." ²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one knows about it." ³¹ But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

³² As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

Introduction

This portion of Scripture is about seeing and not seeing. There are two blind men who truly see who Jesus is, while the sighted Pharisees are unable to see his true identity. The blind men see Jesus to be "the son of David," while the Pharisees see him to be the son of Satan. The common crowds see Jesus heal a mute man and consider him to be marvelous, while the elite Pharisees see him to be morally malignant. Matthew sees Jesus to be the sweet Savior of Israel, while the leaders of Israel see him as a demonic deceiver. How could they miss this? How could the crowds marvel at Jesus while the Pharisees completely missed his real identity?



Opening Blind Eyes (v.27-31)

There are two miracles in this portion of Scripture. First, Jesus heals two blind men and second, he casts out a demon who had made a man mute, and then the man began to speak. First, we will watch Jesus open the eyes of the blind men. This is the ninth miracle Matthew has presented us with since the conclusion of the sermon on the mount.

Scene 1: Shouting in the Streets (v.27)

The scene begins in the streets where there is lots of noise and shouting.

Matthew 9:27 (ESV) And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David."

And as Jesus passed on from there. The previous paragraph places this story in Capernaum¹ which is located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus had just raised from the dead the 12-year old daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue.² So, this scene continues in the town of Capernaum. Jesus is walking through the town.



Two blind men followed him. The news of Jesus' ability to heal has been traveling far and wide. After the raising from the dead of this little girl, Matthew tells us, "And the report of this went through all that district" (Mt 9:26). We've already seen that wherever Jesus went, crowds of people followed him (Mt 4:23-25; 8:16). Just as the woman who had the persistent hemorrhaging had heard of Jesus' ability to heal, so these two blind men have heard about Jesus and are following him in hope of being healed. They were desperate and so they created quite a scene as they followed him. Since crowds of people followed Jesus, it would have been easy for these blind men to follow the noise as they sought Jesus.

Crying aloud. These men were *crying aloud* as they were following him. The word translated 'crying aloud' (*krazōntes κράζοντες*) means, "to shout or cry out, with the possible implication of the unpleasant nature of the sound—to scream."³ The word "is based on the croaking of ravens. The meaning is a. 'to croak or cry with a loud and raucous voice,' b. 'to demand with

¹ See Matthew 8:4; 9:1.

² Matthew 9:18; cf. Mark 5:22.

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 398.

cries."⁴ These two men were desperate. They wanted to be healed and they were convinced that Jesus could help them, but they could not see to get near him, so they cried out loudly to get his attention.

"Have mercy on us." These men were crying out for mercy. Showing *mercy* to someone means showing kindness, compassion, or leniency to someone who does not deserve it. Mercy is withholding punishment from someone who rightly deserves it or relieving someone's suffering when one is not obligated to do so.

For example, being shown mercy is what happens when you are pulled over for doing 55mph in a 40mph zone and instead of getting \$120 citation, you instead receive only a warning. Mercy is not receiving what you just do deserve.

Blindness in the Bible is often seen as a just judgment by God. When the perverse men of Sodom sought to rape the men—who were actually angels of God—visiting Lot, God struck them with blindness (Gn 19:11). When Moses warned Israel against future disobedience against God, he threatened them with blindness (Dt 28:28). When they disciples came across the man born blind, they assumed that his blindness was punishment for some sin, either his or his parent's (Jn 9:2). It was *not* the result of sin in that case (and thus ought not to be assumed so in every case of blindness or any other disability), but they assumed it was which helps us to understand the first century Jewish mindset. And when Paul confronted Elymas the magician for his attempt to keep the gospel from being heard by the proconsul, the Holy Spirit struck him with blindness (Acts 13:8-11).

Thus, the cry for mercy by these blind men indicates that they understood that they had no right to demand to be healed of their blindness. Nevertheless, they saw Jesus as a man of compassion who had the **authority to be merciful** to them, by entering into their lives and relieving their suffering.

Perhaps they had heard of what Jesus said to the Pharisees during dinner at Matthew's house, "*Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'*" *For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners*" [to repentance] (Mt 9:13; cf. Lk 5:32). Whatever the case may be, they persistently cried out to Jesus for him to be merciful to them.

Son of David. The title they used for Jesus is unlike any we've heard up to this point, and this may be the reason why Matthew highlights them. They called Jesus, "**Son of David.**" We've only seen this phrase in the very first verse of Matthew's gospel. No one up to this point has referred to Jesus in this way. The **use of this title by these two men indicate that they saw something in Jesus that no one else saw.** They saw him as **Messiah.** Why?

First, God and God alone could open the eyes of the blind. In a conversation with Moses the LORD said to him,

Exodus 4:11 (ESV)

⁴ Walter Grundmann, "Κράζω, Ἀνακράζω, Κραυγή, Κραυγάζω," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 898.

“Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?”

God is sovereign over both sight and sound. This truth is affirmed by the psalmist.

Psalms 146:8 (ESV) the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

Thus, God alone has power to give sight to the blind. However, God promised that he would one day send a man through whom he would bless the world by working such wonders.

God had made a promise to David that through one of his sons he would establish the kingdom and reign upon his throne forever (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:29). Isaiah added to this notion the prophecy that is repeated every Christmas season, that

“a son would be born, upon whose shoulder God's government would rest, and of the increase of his government there would be no end, for upon the throne of David his father, and over his kingdom, he would reign with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

God promised David the messiah. Isaiah spoke of the messiah. Furthermore, God spoke through Isaiah of day that would come when He would turn nightside up this upside down world and reverse this curse of sin upon the world and bring in a new day, saying,

Isaiah 29:18 (ESV)

In that day the deaf shall hear
the words of a book,
and out of their gloom and darkness
the eyes of the blind shall see.

And again, he says,

Isaiah 35:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

God explains that the one by whom all this will be accomplished will be a Suffering Servant who alone would be uniquely anointed by the Holy Spirit⁵ to work God's will in the world by bringing justice and freedom.

Isaiah 42:6-7 (ESV)

I will give you as a covenant for the people,
a light for the nations,
⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

The people of Israel understood all of these passages to point to the Messiah, who was to come and would bring God's kingdom into this broken and cursed world. **God gave these prophecies beforehand in order to make clear the messianic credentials.** These prophecies were necessary in order for the identity of messiah to be clearly revealed. These two blind men were apparently the first to see Jesus as God's messiah.

The use, by these two blind men, of the title "Son of David" is a clear indication that they saw Jesus as God's Messiah. "There can be no doubt that the blind men were confessing Jesus as Messiah. They may have been physically blind, but they really 'saw' better than many others."⁶

Scene 2: Speaking in the House (vs.28-30)

The story moves from outside with shouting on the street, to inside with speaking in the house. Jesus, in the privacy of the house, speaks with the two blind men.

Matthew 9:28-30 (ESV) ²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one knows about it."

When he entered the house, the blind men came to him. Jesus did not immediately respond to the loud cries of these blind men while they were outside on the street. However, they did not give up. These two men had enough faith and determination to continue to follow Jesus, even after he "**entered the house.**" When Matthew previously used this phrase, in 9:10, he was referring to his own house.⁷ Thus, assuming this is the same referent, he means that Jesus had returned to Matthew's house, with whom presumably he was lodging. Whichever house it is,

⁵ See Isaiah 61:1-2, which Jesus read and declared fulfilled in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth when he began his public ministry.

⁶ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 233.

⁷ See Mark 2:15; Luke 5:29.

these men pressed through the crowd, the disciples, and went into the house to be near Jesus. They would let nothing keep them from Jesus. Inside the house, Jesus finally allowed them to come near and speak with him.

Do you believe I am able to do this? The first words Matthew reports, are not the words of the blind men, but rather the words of Jesus. Matthew does not record them asking anything of Jesus, however their request is presumed. Jesus asks them if they believed he was “able to do this?”

Isn't it interesting that Jesus sometimes asks questions the answers to which seem so very obvious? Doesn't the persistence of these two men demonstrate their belief? Would they have kept following him if they did not believe that Jesus could heal them? Would they have stumbled around, enduring the noise and chaos of the crowds if they did not believe Jesus could heal them? Maybe, or maybe not. Maybe they were bored and needed something to do. Maybe they followed the crowd surrounding Jesus because some people gave them coins or food.

Jesus was not asking this question to discover an answer that he did not already know. He was not seeking knowledge, but rather a verbal confession. Jesus likes it when people confess their faith in him out loud—in spoken word, therefore Jesus asked them if they believed that he could restore their sight? The confession of faith is a confirmation of faith. Remember what the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans.

Romans 10:9-10 (ESV) ⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Jesus also said, “*If you confess me before men, then I will confess you before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father in heaven*” (Mt10:32-33). It is hard but necessary to profess and confess your faith in Jesus. This will become increasingly more difficult, but we must do it, and do it often. May the Lord help us be faithful to his name.

Yes Lord. These men readily confess and happily admit that they believe Jesus is able to do for them what they need. “Yes, Lord,” they said. In essence they said, yes, Lord, we believe that you possess the **power and authority** to heal us of our blindness.

This is quite astounding. It should be noted that no such miracle as this had ever happened before. There is no precedent for this request. Jesus had so far not restored the sight of any other person, so why do these two think he will do so for them? Just as we saw in Jairus the faith in Jesus to believe that he could raise the dead, so here we see faith in Jesus to believe that he could heal the blind. This is amazing.

He touched their eyes. Once again we find Jesus touching those in need. Jesus touched their eyes. Jesus touched the leper and healed him (Mt 8:3). Jesus touched Peter's mother-in-law and healed her (Mt 8:15). Jesus also touched the dead girl's hand and raised her back to life

(Mt 9:25). Jesus also healed without touching⁸, but here he chose to heal these two blind men by touching their eyes.

According to your faith be it done to you. Jesus said this as he touched their eyes. Some have understood “according to” to refer to the *degree* of faith. On this view, Jesus was saying something like, since you have great faith, you will receive a great blessing. Those who hold this view typically believe the converse is true, that is, if you have little faith, then you will only see little blessings. The inevitable conclusion among those who hold such a view is that if a person is *not* healed, then the reason must be that they had too little faith. If only they had greater faith, then they would see and experience greater things.

However, sometimes a **lack of healing is not owing to little faith, but rather to the will of God.** Consider the apostle Paul. He had great faith and yet he was not healed of his “thorn in the flesh,” because it was *not* God’s will that he be healed (1 Cor 9:8-10). And sometimes people are healed who have no faith at all, such as the paralytic lying beside the pool at Bethesda⁹ and the lame beggar lying at the Beautiful Gate of the temple.¹⁰ God is not constrained to heal or not based solely upon the faith or lack thereof of any particular person. If he were, I doubt the Red Sea would have been split wide open so that Israel could walk across on dry land. It is better to understand “according to” here to mean, “in response to.” Since these two blind men believe that Jesus is the Son of David, then the Son of David will bless them with a demonstration of his power and authority.

And their eyes were opened (v.30). As Jesus touched them and declared to them that their faith in him would be effective, their eyes were opened and they were able to see. Their blind eyes were healed. The sight was restored. At the words of Jesus, whatever was wrong with the optic nerve, retina, cornea, or iris, was immediately corrected. The Son of David was present to heal. The Messiah was near “and their eyes were opened.”

See that no one knows about it (v.30). The most apparent reason for why Jesus so often warns against spreading the news of miracles appears to be to minimize opposition against him until the time had come. You will recall that Jesus commanded the two Gadarene men, out of whom Jesus cast a whole herd of demons, to go home and tell what Jesus had done for them (Mk 5:19; Lk 8:39). They lived in a primarily Gentile region, while very often in predominately Jewish regions—where opposition to him and his ministry was growing—Jesus often told people not to proclaim what he had done.

Scene 3: Outside the House (v.31)

The next scene takes us outside the house. We discover that these men did not obey Jesus’ command, but rather through them Jesus fame spread.

⁸ As in the case of the paralyzed servant (Matthew 8:6-13).

⁹ John 5:2-9.

¹⁰ Acts 3:2-7.

Matthew 9:31 (ESV) But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

It would be hard for this miracle not to be widely spread abroad given its nature. Most everyone would have been quite familiar with these blind men since they would have likely been forced to be beggars and thus they would have been present in heavily trafficked areas. It would almost be impossible for this miracle to go unnoticed. But these men did not keep quiet, but rather they “spread his fame through all the district.” Where the Son of David is present, light and sight will not be absent.

Opening the Mouth of the Mute (v.32-33a)

Now the second miracle of this portion of Scripture, but the tenth miracle since the conclusion of the sermon on the Mount, where Matthew told us that the crowds were astonished at the authority of Jesus.

Matthew 9:32-33 (ESV) ³² As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke.

As they were going away, behold. Jesus’ healing ministry continues with breathless succession. No sooner do the newly sighted, formerly blind men depart, than another needy person arrives. **Behold!** Look! There is something to see here! See how Jesus pours himself out for the sake of people. Now another event happens which also points to Jesus’ true identity as the Son of David.

A demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. We have seen Jesus encounter many people oppressed by demons before in this gospel. Notice that this man is “**brought to**” Jesus, supposedly by friends or family. He, like the paralytic, needs the help of others in order to meet Jesus. This man is very different from the two blind men who followed Jesus of their own volition and as an expression of their own faith. About the faith or lack thereof in this demon-oppressed man, we are told absolutely nothing. This is not important to Matthew at this time. However, this is first time that the demonic oppression is manifested by causing a person to be **mute**. This is what is important for Matthew and his purposes.

When the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. Note that Matthew gives no details at all about the casting out of this demon. He does not tell what Jesus said or even give the slightest details about by what means Jesus cast this demon out. All that is important to him is that when the demon was cast out, then **the mute man spoke**. This important to **Matthew because the mute being able to speak is one of the activities by which the Messiah and Son of David will be identified.** We’ve already seen this earlier when we considered Isaiah 35, but let’s see it again.

Isaiah 35:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

When messiah comes, "*the tongue of the mute will sing for joy.*" He's here. Messiah is here. The mute are speaking! Under the *power and authority of Jesus, Son of David, this man was set free from the demon who kept him mute and he spoke.* We know nothing of what he said, but we do know that he spoke. The result was wonderful and amazing.

Crowds Marveled, Pharisees Miss Messiah (v.33b-34)

Finally, we see the crowds marveling at Jesus while the Pharisees are quite mistaken about him.

Matthew 9:33-34 (ESV) And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

The crowds marveled. The crowds who witnessed this miracle, stood in awe of what they saw. They marveled at the work of God through Jesus. They were astonished authority and filled with wonder. They were greatly amazed. Their astonishment found expression in the following words.

Never was anything seen like this in Israel. They common people recognized that something new was happening among them. They had never seen anything like this in all the history of Israel. God had visited his people through Jesus and He was once again working wonders among them. The blind see and the mute speak. This is nothing less than the finger of God.

Or is it?

Is this healing of the blind and the speaking of the mute the good work of God or the wicked work of Satan?

The Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons" (v.34). Matthew does not expound on this statement, but rather simply states it. He will return to this in couple of chapters. However, this is astonishing also. How can the Pharisees see the work of Jesus in opening the eyes of the blind, casting out demons, and setting free the man who was mute, and conclude that is the work of the prince of demons?

How do common folk see Jesus and marvel at him while the religious elite see the same Jesus, but conclude that he is morally malignant? How can some see him as sweet Savior while others see as a deceptive demon?

Conclusion

The answer is that seeing Jesus for who he really is is a work of mercy. None of us deserve to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. We have all sinned and fallen short of his glory. We have each one of us turned away to shiny created things, rather than being content to behold the only uncreated One.

And yet, if we cry out to him, in a raucous, squeaky raven sort of voice, for him to be merciful to us, then he hears us. The Son of David has an ear tuned in to croaking voices who will follow him and will not stop seeking him for what they need.

But we must follow HIM and not the crowd. We must seek Him and not the noisy hubbub that always follows the crowd. We must confess our faith in Jesus. Do you believe that he can do what you need him to do? Do you believe that He can supply your every need according to his riches in Christ Jesus? Do you hear him saying to you, "Do you believe I am able to do this for you?"

If so, then open your mouth and confess your faith in him. Open your mouth to him and say, "Yes, Lord." Surrender your life to him. Surrender your sin to him. Receive his Holy Spirit. Open your eyes and marvel at the Messiah. Open your eyes and behold the glory of God in the face of Christ.

With the eyes of your heart, look to Jesus and marvel at Him. Worship him. Allow him to touch your eyes, your mouth, and your heart. Lets sing our praises to the Son of David, the Messiah of God. Members of the Prayer Team are waiting and ready to pray with and for you.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do think the two blind men were following Jesus since he had previously not healed anyone of blindness?
2. Why do the blind men cry out for "mercy," rather than for healing from their blindness? Does anything about Jesus that we have previously seen give a potential reason for this? (See Matthew 9:10-13).
3. What does the title "Son of David" mean? (See Matthew 12:22-23; 22:41-45) What do the Isaiah passages mentioned (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:6-7) reveal about the "Son of David?"
4. Why did Jesus wait to meet the blind men until after he had "entered the house?" Why do you think he did not heal them while out in the street?
5. Why did Jesus ask the blind men if they believed that he could heal them? Do you believe the Lord still does healing miracles today? Why or why not?
6. Why do think Jesus touched the two men, rather than simply healing them by speaking or simply saying like, "Be healed" or "Your eyes be opened?"
7. Why did Jesus want the men to keep this miracle quiet?
8. Why did the miracle of the healing the mute man result in the crowd marveling at Jesus?
9. Why did the Pharisees not have the same response?
10. Has considering this passage changed your mind in any way about the Lord or his work? If so, describe in what way it has changed.
11. Share something marvelous that you have seen the Lord lately do.