

**“Can You See?”**  
**Matthew 9:27-34**  
**January 28, 2018**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Giving sight to the blind is the most common miracle Jesus performs. When John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask if Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells them to report to John what they see and names the restoring of sight to the blind as the first of those. The prominence of this miracle had been prophesied by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. He said that when the servant of the Lord comes to restore all things, then “the eyes of the blind will see” (Is. 42:7).

The likely reason for the frequency of this miracle in the ministry of Jesus is its spiritual connection. Spiritual blindness is an even bigger problem than physical, because it keeps us from understanding who God is. We even use the word “see” to be a synonym for understanding. For example, when we ask someone “Do you see what I mean?” we are asking them if they understand. If you don’t see or understand who the true God is, the effects will not be unlike a blind person trying to drive a car. The failure to see things as they are will quickly lead to crashing that car into some immovable object. A similar thing happens with spiritual blindness, with even more tragic results. When we don’t see the true God, our lives quickly crash.

But the biggest problem of all, as we are going to see in this passage, is the person who is blind but doesn’t know it. I notice three kinds of seeing and non-seeing in this passage.

**I. The Sight of the Blind**

It seems that it was toward the end of the day, and Jesus was walking toward the house where he would be staying that night. Jesus always seemed to have a crowd around him, except when he stole away to be by himself, and I would imagine that this was no exception. Two blind men are in that crowd that is following Jesus. How blind men are able to follow him we’re not told. Perhaps they had guides who were leading them, or perhaps they were just stumbling along the best they could, trusting their heightened sense of hearing to guide them.

What we are told is that they were “crying aloud,” a verb that means to make a demand in a loud voice. I picture a group of reporters all shouting questions at an important person when I try to imagine the tone and volume of their voices. The tense of the verb here indicates that they were shouting

repeatedly. They didn't simply make a quiet request and then go away when the request was ignored. They were shouting with such urgency their request: **"Have mercy on us, Son of David."** The title "Son of David" was the popular way Jews of this day spoke of the Messiah, and this is the first time that title is used to describe Jesus. Ironically, it is two blind men who are the first to see who Jesus really is.

Surprisingly, Jesus ignores them and just keeps walking. Normally, this kind of expression of faith stops him in his tracks and brings forth his compassion and help. He just keeps walking into the house that has been his intended destination all along. Boldly, the blind men walk right in as uninvited guests, continuing to bring their request to Jesus. Instead of healing them, Jesus engages in conversation with them. **"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"** When they answer that they do believe, Jesus touches their eyes while affirming the important role of faith in their healing and restores their sight.

The faith of these men is seen in the words of their request. **"Have mercy on us, Son of David."** Though blind, they saw the true nature of Jesus as the Son of David, the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. Such insight always comes by the work of God's Spirit, but it was likely that their handicap was an aid to this insight. Being deprived of such an important sense as sight served to increase the sharpness of other capabilities. Perhaps these two men spent time talking over what they had been hearing of Jesus' words and works. Their conclusion was that he was indeed the Messiah.

Their approach to him is also filled with faith, coming to him not with a claim based on their own merits, but one based on Jesus' mercy. "Have mercy on us," they cry. They bring their request to Jesus based on who he is, not upon who they are. I find this to be the main dividing line between those who have faith in Jesus and those who don't. The faithful don't believe they need to clean themselves up before coming to Jesus, but come to Jesus for him to provide the cleaning. It is a Jesus-focused faith, not a self-focused faith. It looks up to Jesus, not inward to oneself. We honor God when we appeal to him based on his character of being full of mercy. All the resources of God become available to those who come to him through Jesus for such help.

They had seen the mercy of Jesus, and we can see it again in this story. We see it in the healing touch of Jesus. Jesus touched their unseeing eyes, eyes that likely had some unattractive parts to them. Jesus draws near to the brokenness of life in order to bring restoration. We also see his mercy in the restoration of normal community and social interactions with these individuals. Blindness cuts one off from others. So does muteness and deafness, which Jesus will take care of in the next miracle.

Are you able to voice that cry for mercy right now? Or do you think that you need to get yourself to the place where you are not in need of his mercy? Or perhaps you think right now that you have no need of God's mercy, and that if everyone were just more like you, then the world would be a much better place. Only the truly blind fail to see their great need of Jesus' mercy.

## II. The Myopia of the Faithful

These two blind men have seen the truth of Jesus' mercy and of his identity as the Messiah, and now Jesus has restored to them their physical sight as well. But it becomes clear at the end of the story that their spiritual eyes are not as clear as they could be. **“And Jesus sternly warned them, ‘See that no one knows about it.’ But they went away and spread his fame through all that district”** (9:30-31). Jesus could not have been more clear in his command, telling them to keep quiet about this miracle. It is equally clear that they disobeyed Jesus, telling people throughout the entire district of what Jesus had done.

Someone might object and say, “But isn't it unreasonable on the part of Jesus to expect that they could keep this quiet? Isn't it the most natural thing in the world to want to share this good news with as many as possible?” That's the point. If they really saw who Jesus is, the Messiah and the Son of God, his word alone would be sufficient, even if it didn't make sense to them. They are like us, aren't they? We often say, “I believe, help my unbelief.” They saw something of the true nature of Jesus, but had clouded vision that kept them from seeing this as clearly as they should have.

If we say, “I will only obey Jesus when it makes sense to me and when I can see the benefit to myself of doing so,” then we don't see him as clearly as we should and we are not trusting him as fully as we should. To trust Jesus fully means that we bow to his authority, even putting our feelings and our understanding under that authority. There was a popular song in the 70's that had a line saying, “It can't be wrong when it feels so right.” That sentiment summarizes well contemporary American ethics. “If it feels good, do it.” But for the Christian, our ethical standard must be the authoritative word of Jesus. Our true situation is like the blind downhill skiers I read about several years ago. They were able to manage such a feat only because of the guides right behind them barking out a continuous stream of directions and commands. The first prohibition in the Bible illustrates the importance of listening to God. God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Two things are important to note about that restriction. First, God didn't tell them why they weren't to eat of it. He warned them of the consequences of eating—death—but didn't give them a reason they weren't to eat of it other than God's authoritative word. Second, God put the tree in the middle of the garden, so that Adam and Eve must have passed by it multiple times each day.

That forbidden fruit was designed to increase their trust in God and their love for him. We don't eat it for one reason and one reason only—because God says not to. That's it. I think Jesus' commandment to these men was similar, designed to deepen their trust in Jesus.

Jesus seeks to increase the faith of these two blind men even in the way he restores their sight. The first way he does that is by seeming to ignore their request. Jesus is normally quite eager to respond to faith such as theirs, but seems not to do so here. To the credit of these blind men, Jesus' rebuff didn't cause them to give up but to increase both their desperation for Jesus to act and their boldness in coming to him. They follow him right into a house and corner him there. When God seems to be ignoring your request, he has not forgotten you. He is at work to increase your desperation for him and your trust in him.

A few years ago, I was riding my bike at Oak Mountain State Park when I came upon the cycling leg of an under twelve Triathlon. I noticed ahead of me a girl who was pedaling hard and in first place. Then as she began climbing a hill, she lost her chain and didn't know how to put it back on again. She was crying when I got to her, pleading with me to stop and help her put her chain back on. As I was doing that, she looked back and saw the second place competitor, a young boy, pass her. She said to me, with tears in her eyes, "Please hurry up, mister." I didn't stick around to see who won that race, but my money would have been on that girl, who had such a fierce determination. That is the kind of determination Jesus wants to build in these blind men, and in us. So if you are in a situation of desperate need and Jesus seems to be ignoring your need, don't misinterpret his silence. He is not abandoning you, but attempting to bless you with a stronger grip upon him. Just keep coming to him like these blind men did.

The second thing Jesus does to build their faith is to invite them into self-examination. He asks them, **"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"** You can always know that when Jesus asks a question it is never to get information he didn't previously have. Rather, he asks questions for the benefit of the one he asks. He wants these men to look within their hearts and ask themselves what they believe. Such self-examination is a fertilizer to help grow our faith.

### **III. The Blindness of the Sighted**

The final miracle Matthew records in this chapter is the healing of the mute man through the casting out of the demon oppressing this man. The Bible doesn't teach that all physical problems have their origin in demon-possession, but it does teach that some physical maladies have such an origin. That is the case here, and Jesus heals this man as he casts out the demon oppressing him. It seems that the reason Matthew records this miracle is because of the

reaction of the Pharisees to it. **“He casts out demons by the prince of demons”** (9:34).

And so this section on the miracles of Jesus ends. Chapter eight ended with a rejection of Jesus when the townspeople of the Gadarene demoniac asked Jesus to leave their region. But those were Gentiles, and we might expect such an unbelieving response from idolaters such as that. But here we have Jesus also rejected by the leaders of his own people. This objection is interesting in itself. Notice that they don't dispute the reality of these miracles, for the simple reason that they are beyond dispute. Even Jesus' enemies had to accept the fact of the miracles. Since they couldn't question the reality of his miracles, they sought to discredit him by challenging the origin of his miracles. His power, which is indisputable, they allege comes from Satan himself. This is an example of something psychologists call “belief persistence.” Once you make up your mind about something and attach yourself to a belief, it becomes difficult to dislodge that belief no matter how much evidence might be marshalled against it. When confronted with the evidence of Jesus' Messianic identity through these miracles, the Pharisees rejected it not for lack of evidence but because they didn't want him to be the Messiah.

If you are here today and you are holding yourself back from a full embrace of Jesus for what you consider intellectual reasons, I would challenge you to ask yourself a question. Are your intellectual objections true reasons, or are they reasons that you have latched on to in order to allow you to continue to be in control of your own life? You might say, “I just need more evidence.” But again I would challenge you. Is the lack of evidence the real problem, or is it your heart's dislike of giving control of your life to Jesus? The Pharisees certainly didn't lack evidence, but they still rejected Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Why should you give up control of your life to Jesus? Let me answer that question by asking you another. What must it have felt like to Jesus to be rejected with this accusation that he cast out demons through Satan's power? Satan is the very one most responsible for all the brokenness Jesus came to repair. Satan had done all he could to destroy God's image bearers, men and women whom Jesus loves. It would be like having your own children accuse you of trying to hire someone to kill them. This would not be the last rejection Jesus would encounter. In the not too distant future, his closest disciples are going to abandon him in his hour of need. And most painful of all, his heavenly Father rejected him when our sin was laid upon him. I know of no greater pain than rejection like this. And yet Jesus chose it because it was the only way to bring us back to himself. Do you believe this?