

Gospel of Matthew

9:27-38

...He had compassion!



So in this chapter 9, we see Jesus as a teacher, preacher, and healer. He has healed the leper, the paralyzed, the fevered, he has cast out all manner of demons, He's healed the woman plagued with the issue of blood and He has even raised the dead! And these are just a sampling of the healings He actually did! In our text today, Jesus heals blind men, and a man who is plagued by a demon that has made him mute – unable to speak. It is an event that is exclusive to the book of Matthew. There is no parallel passage in the other gospels to give any other details. All that we have is what is here



Two blind men have been trailing behind Jesus and His entourage of disciples. Along with many sick people that followed behind calling out to Jesus for His attention/help, two were calling out, “*Have mercy on us, Son of David*”. By calling Him “*Son of David*”, they were acknowledging who He was – that they believed Him to be the Messiah, because it was known by all Jews that the Messiah, the Promised One of God would be a descendant of David.

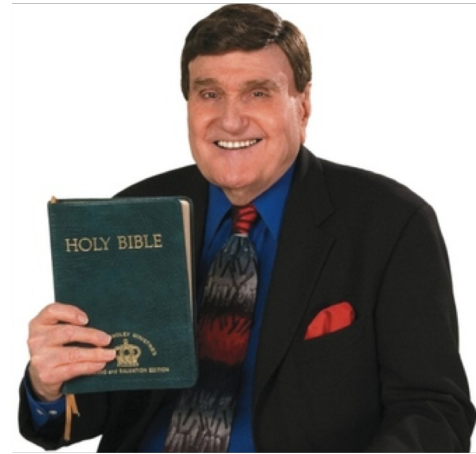


So they were calling out that they believed Jesus to be the Messiah! That’s a big deal, because He *WAS* the Messiah, and He had been proving it rather than saying it. He was displaying great and powerful acts of God to bring healing to the sick, maimed, and afflicted. Nothing like this had ever happened in Israel. There had certainly been miracles from some of the prophets, but nothing like the output that Jesus was exhibiting – one after another, after another, after another,.. morning until night, day after day, week after week, month after month! So Jesus was doing these great exhibitions of power, but He was not declaring Himself the Messiah! He was actually letting others come to that conclusion! Again, it was a timing thing, I think. He was not trying to win it all in a few months! He had a certain amount of time to begin a movement of God on earth made up of people who would believe, who would follow Him, who would understand, who would *trust* Him!

But these two blind men believed. They believed in Jesus – why? Because they had seen the miracles?! No, they hadn't seen Jesus do miracles, had they?! They were **BLIND!** They could not see Him do anything! They could hear about it from others that **could** see, but that was the extent of it! Eyewitness accounts are what did for them! They believed without ever having actually witnessed one miracle themselves! This is the kind of faith that the followers of Jesus would need in the future when He was gone and person after person would have to rely upon the eyewitness accounts of others to come to Jesus and place their faith in Him. To this day, people are still putting their faith in Jesus based upon the story of others. Jesus is still working miracles, and His followers are proclaiming His amazing work in their own lives. Some have been healed of physical diseases. Others have had their wounded memories healed! Still others have had their hearts changed! All who have given themselves to Him have felt their sins and wrongdoing lifted off their shoulders, and they have been unburdened, cleansed, and forgiven by their Creator/God! He has become *Life* to them,.. to US! We have been given understanding to know God, and to know what He has done for us. And with that comprehension, we have loved Him!



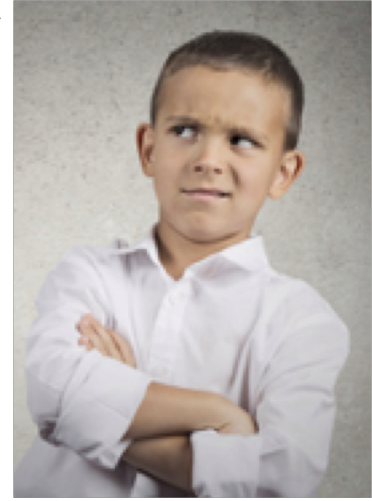
These eyewitnesses would not have lied for some obvious reasons. With today's faith healers, we know that a lot of lying occurs. They are showmen and I have no problem whatsoever in asserting that. I am certain of it. The most prominent ones have all been exposed as fakes.



Back then, these people were not enculturated to go along with a fake narrative. They were not Christians and not even true Christ-followers yet (even though they were “following” Him in the story). They were not plants in the crowd, but were known to be long-time blind men by the others there, because they were most likely well-known beggars.

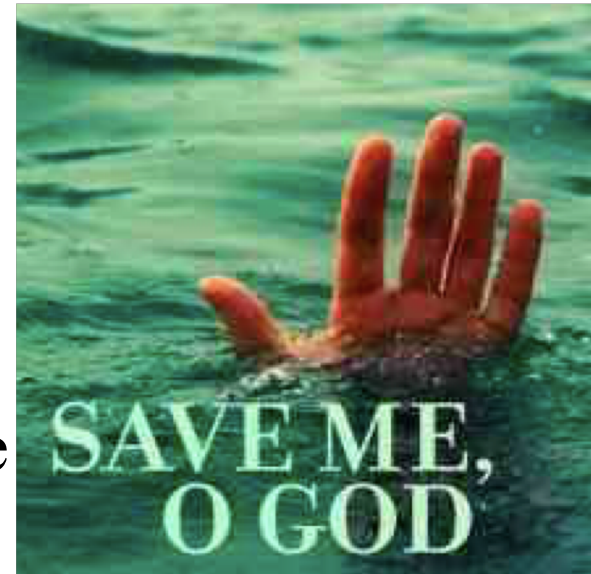
Finally, they did not cooperate with the program! They were ordered by Jesus to keep this thing quiet, and they could not, and ***did not!*** I mean how could they? They were blind, known to be blind, and suddenly were ***not*** blind! That was going to cause a stir everywhere they went among people who knew them! So when they were pressed for how this had happened, they did not lie!

I don't even want to touch the statement “*according to your faith will it be done to you*”. Throughout my life I have heard it misused by faith healers, and some followers of faith healers, to defend themselves when someone is not healed - “*You just don't have enough faith! You must have more faith!*” I think this is simply referring to whether these men believed that Jesus could heal them – not how their faith compared to other's. They obviously believed!



If you've noticed, Jesus did not waste time and energy on die-hard skeptics. Skeptics did not come to Jesus for healing anyway. They would rather live with their misery than to humble themselves and come to Jesus for help. So they didn't get any from Him. That's just the way it works.

Christ could not help the people who did not believe because they would not come to Him for help. Do you see what I'm saying? He wanted to help them, but He couldn't! "***Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often I would have gathered you... But you wouldn't!***" A person cannot help someone who will not them – not even Jesus! That is a social law! As a pastor, I know that I can only help people who have respect for me. It is impossible to even begin helping someone who for reasons of their own do not like or respect me. That is something someone must grant me ***before*** I can give them pastoral help and care.



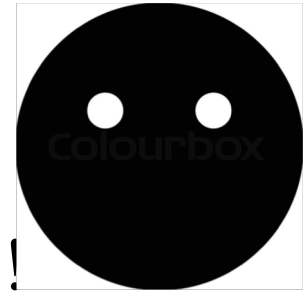
These two men believed in Jesus and gave Him what He needed to heal Him. They surrendered themselves to His care and that was all He needed to recreate their eyes and give them perfect sight.

So that is included in this statement – “*according to your measure of faith I will help you*”. It does NOT mean as so many have echoed, that it depends upon the how much faith a person can conjure up! If that were the case, one of these two would see better than the other. They were individuals with a different measure of faith. If one had just a little fear, or doubt, maybe he would have received only 20/30 vision or worse! It would mean only partial healings for all kinds of people with weaker faith. Some of the paralyzed would have received some movement back but not all, because their faith was not complete. Someone without an arm would receive half an arm because their faith was only at 50 percent! Or someone with hearing loss would only get *some* of their hearing back – which is better than nothing, but not . But, of course, it didn’t happen that way. People of weaker faith were healed by Christ just as completely as people with great faith! So don’t ever buy into this notion that you need more faith for God to work! If you come to Jesus for help, it is enough! You wouldn’t be there without faith!



So this statement is only about people humbling themselves and coming to Jesus for help - “*Because you came to me, and because of your persistence, I will do this for you*”

Then there is this weird thing with the demon-possessed mute. Jesus cast out the demon, and the man who was well-known by everyone in the region to be a mute, could suddenly speak! Everyone was amazed, it says. But then the narrative points out that, actually, not *everyone* was impressed. No, some were even saying that Jesus was casting out demons using the power of Satan! Wow! He wasn't going to win with those people, was He - no matter what He did?!



In Matthew 12:22ff Jesus answers the same accusation by pointing out the absurdity of such an assertion. *“If Satan were casting out his own forces”,* He said, *“then he would be divided, working against himself, schizophrenic, and his kingdom would not be as successful as it is!”*

Vs. 10 – Jesus went into the towns and cities, specifically, in northern Judea, in Galilee, and preached “*the good news of the Kingdom*” - the good news of the Kingdom meant that He was telling people that the Kingdom of God had arrived! It was right there – among them! He told them that they could repent and turn from their sin and they would be heard by God, because God knows their heart. Then he would go ahead and heal more sick and diseased people and cast out more demons. It was the exclamation point upon his message. The healings served to make people look to Him as a prophet and take Him seriously!

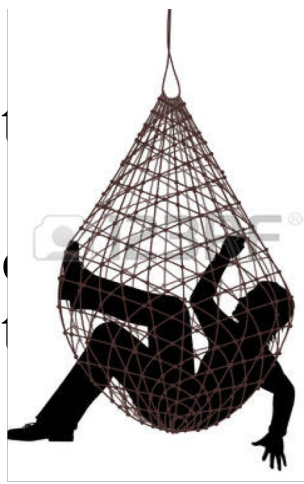


~Interestingly enough, all of this was taking place in Galilee. The Jews in the south, at or around Jerusalem, viewed the Jews of Galilee as less sophisticated, somewhat foreign, much akin to the traditional view of an Irishman or Scotsman in London England. They had a distinct accent that was the butt of jokes in Judea proper, in the same way a northerner in the USA will mimic the exaggerated southern draw of an American from Alabama, or Louisiana, and other parts of the south, as if they are less intelligent or inbred or something.

~The Galileans were also more racially diverse because of being overrun by the Assyrians 800 years previously when the entire Jewish population had been hauled away to slavery and the area left bare of people. So it was much more racially and culturally mixed than the purebred, elitist Judeans around Jerusalem. They looked down on Galileans as mixed breed.

~It was a less strict culture in which Jesus and His Kingdom message could find a wider acceptance.

~The Galileans were separated from Southern Judea by the “province” of Samaria.¹⁰



The people that Jesus went to in Galilee were fiercely loyal Judaism, but they were like most “Christians” today. In general, they didn’t know that much about the law, not the finer points of the Law, the later additions Jews of the south excelled in.

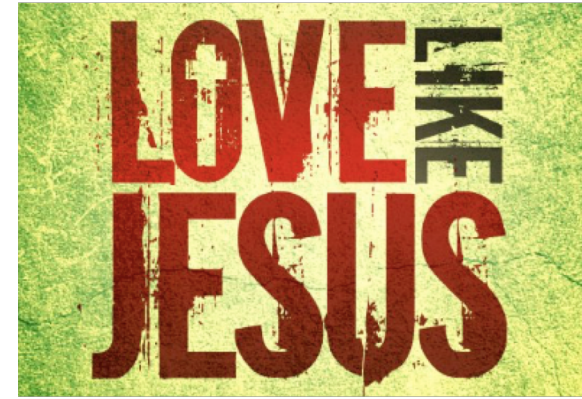
Jesus looks into their hearts and sees the emptiness there.

They are religious but they were missing the point of their

existence – to have fellowship with their Creator! So close and yet so far! The bottom line is that they were desperately empty, unfulfilled, and “harassed”. I’m not sure what Jesus meant by “harassed”. Technically it means to be troubled by repeated attacks. Perhaps He was referring to demonic activity which seemed so unusually prevalent/pronounced in that region. The demonic activity might have been as much as it was purely because Jesus was there! Rev. 12 refers to the increased activity of Satan, the dragon, trying desperately to destroy the child – presumably the Christ! Undoubtedly Satan was represented in Galilee in strength of numbers like no other time and place in history!

But Jesus sees the plight of the Galileans and He feels for them. They are caught like an animal in a snare with no way out, and He knows that only He can free them!

What Jesus says to His disciples then, is very much an appeal to us now! He needs followers who are harvesters - who see/sense the desperation of the people around us! He needs followers who see and care about people's predicament in the same manner He did!



He needs followers/harvesters, people that are truly purposed with the purposes of God – the task that Jesus was obsessed with! He is calling for follower/harvesters that are always on alert, looking for opportunities to present the claims of Christ, creating opportunities to share Jesus with those who are desperate and “harassed” and ready for a major change. Jesus is what the world needs. We have Him and we need to find ways to present Him to those that need Him!

I have heard that less than 10 percent of “born-again” Christians will *ever* share Christ with another human being during the course of their lives after claiming to have given their heart to Him. I truly believe that the people here at this church have exceeded that sorry figure!



But my prayer is that you all will feel the thrill of sharing Christ – and even better, *praying with someone* to become a follower of Jesus.

Can we pray about this now? Jesus told us to pray for harvesters because there is a great need! So let's obey Him by praying for ourselves first. Then for each other. What a calling we have from our God – a glorious purpose! It outfits our lives with a great and compelling mission! It gives our existence a substance, a richness that runs deep and satisfying!