



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for January 17, 2010
Released on Wednesday, January 13, 2010**

"Demonstrated Acts of Healing"

Lesson Text: Matthew 9:27-34; 11:26

Background Scripture: Matthew 9:27-34; 11:2-6

Devotional Reading: Luke 5:27-32

Matthew 9:27-34

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.

28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

Matthew 11:2-6

2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see:

5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to study Jesus' healing of a blind man, casting a devil out of another, and Jesus' response to the question of John the Baptist.

Principle: to realize that Jesus helped those in need when they expressed faith in Him.

Application: to encourage believers today to stretch their faith and see Jesus do unusual things in their lives.

Introduction

A significant part of Matthew's Gospel is Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 through 7.

To those listening as Jesus spoke, He sounded so authoritative that they could not help wondering where this man had come from and exactly who he was. Perhaps Matthew had overheard some of this concern and confusion, because he seems to have arranged his Gospel to immediately answer those doubts. Chapter 8 is full of accounts of miracles that would cause people to recognize that this was not merely another rabbi. If they were astonished about Jesus' teachings, they needed to investigate further and watch His ministry.

Again and again, people whom Jesus encountered received healing because of their belief in His divine power. The Gospels clearly and frequently discuss the role of faith in healing. On the other hand, some were unable to be blessed because they refused to believe in Him. Today we explore these two responses.

Belief and Disbelief (Matthew 9:27-31)

1. Whom did Jesus meet as He left Jairus's home? (v. 27)

Today's text starts right after Jesus left Jairus' home (vs.18-26). Jesus is moving around Galilee as He preaches and teaches. He may now be in the vicinity of Capernaum, where He had begun to preach (see Matthew 4:13). After leaving Jairus's home, he met two blind men who followed him crying out for His help. These men knew who Jesus was and what he could do for them.

The title that the *blind men* use as they approach Jesus is significant. The address *Son of David* indicates that they have concluded that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah (see Matthew 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9; 22:42). The common belief is that the Christ as Son of David will be the heir of King David. In that capacity, the Son of David will reestablish David's throne (see 2 Samuel 7). Most likely the blind men have reached their conclusion on the basis of reports of Jesus' healings in the region.

Their conclusion echoes Matthew's Gospel which begins with a lengthy genealogy that documents Jesus' ancestry. This clarifies His royal pedigree in order to establish His credentials as the Messiah.

The blind men speak to Jesus as they would to a king who has power over their lives, humbly asking Him to be merciful to them. Psalm 72:12-14 describes one who will deliver the poor and needy. The blind men's request clearly reflects their belief that Jesus can and will act in this way.

2. Why did Jesus delay His response to them until He was in a house? (v. 28)

After sticking close to Jesus through the streets (which is not easy for blind men to do!), the two follow Him into a certain *house*. There they press their appeal. The fact that Jesus did not heal them out in the street on their initial request perhaps reveals Jesus' intention to explore their thinking about Him in more detail.

Rather than asking about the source or nature of their medical condition as a doctor would, Jesus addresses the men's spiritual situation. Jesus' question is stated in terms of their belief in His power. We may find Jesus' question to be a bit curious. Clearly, if the two men have been following Jesus through the town and even into the house begging for healing, they must *believe* that He can do something to help them!

The question, however, requires the blind men to state their faith publicly before those who are gathered. The healing to follow thus becomes evidence that their faith is valid. In other words, their public confession of faith sets a backdrop for the

healing that makes Jesus' identity crystal clear. Both men confess their faith in Jesus!

3. What caused the blind men to receive healing? What was Jesus' reply (v. 29)?

Jesus' reply repeats a common refrain in this section of Matthew's Gospel. While Jesus does not always heal by using touch as He does here (compare Matthew 8:13; 9:6, 7; contrast 13:58), He frequently states that a healing has come about as the result of *faith*. Sometimes this is the faith of the sick individual (see 9:22); on other occasions, Jesus honors the faith of those who make a request on behalf of someone else in need of healing (8:13; 9:2; 15:28).

It is important to stress that Jesus does not suggest that healing will come automatically to faithful people. Neither does Jesus suggest that those who are not healed can be blamed automatically for lack of faith. If this were the case, we would have to conclude that the apostle Paul was not a man of faith since he suffered with an unhealed "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Rather, the healing of the blind men indicates that Jesus' miracles should be closely associated with a response of faith. In other words, Jesus' miracles and teaching to this point have led these men to realize that He is the Son of David. Their healing, in turn, will lead others to come to the same conclusion and place faith in Him. Jesus' power proves who He is. Matthew thus closely ties Jesus' identity as the Christ to the works that He does: the miracles confirm and support the message.

As we can see, Jesus was never afraid to touch those who needed Him to minister to them, including those with leprosy (8:1-3). He never hesitates to "touch" us spiritually when we need Him, but we must notice His response: "According to your faith be it unto you" (9:29).

4. What happened after Jesus told them not to tell about their healing, and why did He tell them this? (vs. 30-31)

As soon as Jesus spoke those words, the blindness left, giving evidence that the men did indeed possess faith. Jesus immediately instructed them to "see that no man know it." Jesus "charged" (spoke very sternly to) them—not because He was angry but because He wanted them to take His command very seriously.

The Nelson Study Bible has a good footnote about His command: "Jesus wanted to discourage the masses from coming to Him for physical healing alone, because His primary purpose was spiritual healing. Physical healing simply served to authenticate His claim to be the promised Messiah" (Radmacher et al., eds., Nelson). It is clear that Jesus did not want His miracles to become the focus of attention, thus replacing His message. His intention was to preach the gospel, not just be known as a miracle worker.

Earlier Jesus had healed a leper and given him the same order (Matt. 8:4). Mark 1:40-45 also records that incident. When that man disobeyed Jesus by spreading the word about what He had done, it affected His ministry greatly. "But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter" (v. 45). He had to relocate outside the city and away from the masses to have the opportunity to be heard properly.

These men also disobeyed, but we sense that it was because of their excitement over being healed.

Healing the Demon Possessed (Matthew 9:32-34)

5. What was the need of the man Jesus met later, and what caused the need? (Matthew 9:32,33)

Once again, as Jesus left the building, He was met with someone in need. We cannot tell who "they" were who brought this man, but presumably they were relatives or good friends concerned about his welfare. Matthew appears to continue proving what was stated in Isaiah 35:5-6. This man was mute and demon possessed. It was not always the case that demons in a person caused an inability to speak, but in this man they had. His muteness was not from natural medical causes but was brought on by the demon.

Jesus cast the demon out of this man, who was immediately freed from his muteness. No details of what Jesus did in this incident are given. What was important was the instant return of natural physical ability when the demon was exorcised, showing Jesus doing what had been prophesied of Him. The response of those witnessing the miracle was amazement. They exclaimed that nothing like that had ever been seen in Israel. No doubt Jesus continued to be concerned that His miracles not overshadow His message of salvation.

6. What explanation did the religious leaders offer for what Jesus did for this man? (v. 34)

Matthew clearly wishes to contrast the attitude of *the Pharisees* with that of the blind men from the previous story and of the crowds who have just witnessed the exorcism. "Seeing is believing" for the average person. But the Pharisees take a different approach to evaluate what Jesus is doing.

The fact that the mute man immediately speaks (v. 33, above) makes it impossible to deny that a genuine miracle has occurred (compare Acts 4:16).

Since the Pharisees already have concluded that Jesus is a false teacher and a blasphemer (see Matthew 9:3), they interpret His miracles as proof positive that He is in league with Satan, *the prince of the devils*. When they make a similar accusation on a later occasion, Jesus characterizes their attitude as "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" and warns that such a sin cannot be forgiven (Matthew 12:22-32).

People still choose to respond to Jesus in a variety of ways. Some question the source of His power. More commonly in our day, people simply deny that He was really able to do these things at all. Others, however, see the miracles as confirming Jesus' true identity as the Son of David and Son of God.

Answering John's Questions (Matthew 11:2-6)

At some point, John the Baptist is imprisoned by Herod Antipas for criticizing Herod's immoral marriage to his former sister-in-law (see Mark 6:17, 18). Our second passage picks up at a time when the imprisoned John sends his disciples to gather information about Jesus' activity. Luke 7:18-23 is parallel.

7. What circumstances led John to send two disciples to Jesus, and what was their question for Him? (Matthew 11:2,3)

We must keep in mind that John was in prison during Jesus' ministry. John had previously preached that Messiah was coming to execute judgment, but he was not hearing anything about this in his prison cell. John's question (Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?) reveals his confusion. Although Jesus has become popular, He hasn't been very proactive in setting up the kingdom of God as people commonly expect that kingdom to manifest itself. If Jesus really is the *Christ*, as John originally thought back in Matthew 3, then why are the Romans still in power?

Some speculate that John's question reflects his desperation about his own situation, as he realizes that his life is in danger. The difficult circumstance may be leading John to doubt his initial confidence in Jesus' identity.

8. How did Jesus respond, and what prophet prophesied of His acts? (vs. 4,6)

Jesus doesn't give a straight "Yes, I am the one" kind of answer. Instead, He tells John's disciples to examine the evidence and report what they *hear and see* to John. The exact evidence that Jesus suggests they examine is the subject of verse 5: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Jesus' response to John's inquiry clearly indicates the purpose of Jesus' ministry. The kinds of miracles and preaching that Jesus cites here appear in messianic prophecies in the book of Isaiah, such as Isaiah 29:18; 35:5, 6; 61:1, 2. In those passages we see promises of what will happen when the Christ appears.

Jesus' miracles not only reveal Him to be the Christ, but also clarify the nature of the kingdom that He comes to establish. Jesus does not come to defeat the Romans, but rather to set people free from disease, demons, and sin. The last item on the list in this verse surely is the most significant: the good news of God's kingdom is being proclaimed to *the poor*, who flock to Jesus in response to His powerful works (compare Matthew 5:3). His works are, in fact, designed to generate this response.

9. Why was it important for Jesus to say, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (v. 6)?

Jesus concluded by saying, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matt 11:6). Since John wondered about His activities, others probably did too. They needed to exercise faith, not doubt, and should not be offended by His ministry.

"Those who did not miss the true character of the Lord would be truly blessed. Though He will ultimately bring judgment to this world by judging sin when He brings in His kingdom, the timing then was not appropriate. But all, including John, who truly perceived the person and work of Christ would be blessed" (Walvoord and Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor).

CONCLUSION

Take some time to present a proper understanding regarding divine miracles and discuss it with your students. It is foolish to think that God will always provide a miracle whenever we think we need one. While Jesus did say that His disciples would receive whatever they asked for in His name, we should not forget that the requests must be in accordance with God's will (1 John 5:14-15).

The best approach would seem to be to bring a need to God in prayer, seek to exercise faith, and ask that God's will be done about it. Then it is time for patience and perseverance in prayer until God grants the petition, declines it, or causes us to wait for it. When it comes, it may be miraculous or not, but God deserves the glory for the answer.

PRACTICAL POINTS

- 1.** Need begets desire, desire begets hope, hope begets faith, and faith begets salvation (Matt. 9:27-30).
- 2.** The joy of God's salvation cannot be restrained (v. 31).
- 3.** When God undeniably manifests His glory and goodness, His enemies will persist and call it evil (vs. 32-34).
- 4.** When we are in great distress, even the most faithful will be tempted to doubt (11:2-3).
- 5.** Tragedies can make us forget God's love, but remembering it restores our faith (vs. 4,5).

6. He who holds fast to his faith in God while others fall away is greatly blessed (v. 6).

PRAYER

Lord, so often we struggle in our faith and commitment. Often we feel disappointed because You don't give us the things we ask for when we want them or because You lead us to places we don't want to go. Sometimes we are tempted to doubt Your love, or even Your existence. Please help us remember the blessing that will come to us for accepting Christ as He revealed himself and following His word. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Jesus' works reveal His identity.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is from Matthew 11:25-30 "**Declared in Prayer.**" Matthew 11 uses only three verses (vs. 25-27) to record Jesus' prayer. For your students to get a better concept of how Jesus prayed, suggest reading John 17. The invitation to come to Jesus for rest in Matthew 11:28-30 is worthy of separate study.

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