



Matthew 9:32–34

32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. 33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.” 34 But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

Reflection

Yesterday Jesus healed the blind. The Old Testament records no healing of blindness, and none of Jesus' followers is ever recorded to have given sight to the blind. But Jesus' healing of the blind is one of his most frequent miracles. Because it captures symbolically and so perfectly his mission on earth. It's what he does, he restores sight to the blind, he reverses sin's effects by his blood on the cross, he opens our eyes, awakens us to a new life in him, brings us back into relationship with God and each other so we can live life as we were meant to. Lives that are holy and righteous within a community that is modelled on Christ's love for us; a community that brings great honour and glory to God

and endures forever.

But this is the last things Satan wants. And so he throws everything at Jesus. Whether its temptations in the desert, or storms on the sea of Galilee, or crowds of people suffering from every kind of disease and physical ailment, the prince of this world uses all of his fallen powers in the natural world to try and halt the mission of Jesus. He also brings to bear all of his powers in the supernatural realm, the realm of the demonic, like in our in passage today, trying to stop Jesus.

Today's passage is the second of five specific exorcisms in Matthew's gospel. Satan is throwing everything at Jesus, trying to slow him down, trying to distract him off course. Do you notice that the passage in

front of us starts ‘While they were going out...’ That’s the two blind men Jesus has just healed, they haven’t even left yet and the next poor person has been brought in to Jesus. He’s tormented by a demon, it’s not physical violence this time, he’s somehow held back visibly from speaking – but people know what’s going on inside him. Matthew is circumspect, Jesus drives the demon out, and then the man speaks.

And this caps off a remarkable couple of chapters doesn’t it? After amazing the crowds with the authority of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount our passage today records that the crowds were amazed at the miracles that they were witnessing. Jesus amazed them with his words in the Sermon on the Mount and now he’s amazing them with his works. Jesus is the full

package; he says and then he does, he is who he says he is, he's just proven so in chapters eight and nine.

And this isn't even to speak of the spiritual battle that is going on behind the scenes. Jesus has demonstrated power over nature, power over sin, power over sickness, power over disability, power over demons, even power over death – all of Satan's strongholds are being torn down by Jesus as he walks resolutely to the cross where he will bring an end to Satan, sin and death forevermore. Today, matter-of-fact, he drives out a demon; tomorrow it's his master. Jesus has come to drive out Satan himself, and all of his works and sin's effects on our world. This happened on the cross and it will be fully realised when Jesus returns, when his kingdom

is fully and finally here, and when Satan and all his demons are thrown into hell for eternity. On that same day everything will be made new, all of sin's effects on our world erased forever, there'll be new heavens and a new earth, humankind finally relating to God, and each other, and God's good creation in perfect harmony consistent with God's original design.

As a summary to everything we've witnessed in these two chapters the crowds express their amazement:

“Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.”

But the religious leaders break from popular opinion. You can almost hear them moving amongst the people, trying to turn

them away from Jesus, saying:

“It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

Now this of course makes no sense. As Jesus points out in Chapter 12, why would Satan drive out his own demons? It's amazing what stupid things we can say out of jealousy and pride. But what choice did they have? Do you notice here that even Jesus' opponents can't deny the incredible miracles he's doing? Because there was no denying it. Even secular historians today are on record saying that there can be no question that the historical Jesus was a great healer and miracle worker. The evidence is simply overwhelming. And so there were limited options for the Pharisees: he either is who he says he is,

or he's in league with Satan. Blinded by their jealousy, pride, religious traditions and self-righteousness, and despite all their great learning in the Scriptures they denied what even the most uneducated members of the crowds could see – God's son is finally here.

Think

Please take a few minutes now to reflect back over this passage and the extraordinary miracles of the last two chapters. Nothing like this has ever been seen in the history of the world, before or since. Perhaps meditate over Jesus' power. Or you could think deeply about the effects of sin that you see all around you. As you do this feel our world's desperate need for a saviour like Jesus, someone who has

the power and has acted to bring an end to sin forever. You might consider how Jesus saved this man and immediately he speaks. Are you mute when it comes to Christianity? Saved, but you rarely speak about it? The miracle that Jesus has performed in your life is no less than the ones that have happened to people in these passages. Are you spreading news of him all throughout your region as they were? Or you could reflect on the Pharisees response to Jesus. How's your pride? Could it be blinding you when it comes to your response to Jesus? Is he really number one, are you living wholeheartedly for him, or rejecting some of what he says so you can have it both ways?

Then spend some time praying to God. Bring before him whatever has touched

your heart. Thank him that as Christians Satan no longer has any power over us; that we've been freed to live a new life in Christ. And pray that you and I both might be continually amazed by Jesus, and courageous enough to share openly and boldly what he has done for us with those who he is yet to touch.