

Jesus Opens the Eyes of the Blind

Call to Worship: Psalm 32

1st Scripture: John 1:1-18

2nd Scripture: Matthew 9:27-31

Introduction

Having considered the two profound miracles which our Lord had performed in the previous context, this morning, we move on to consider yet another authenticating sign, performed by our Lord, this time, in the providing of sight to two blind men. And this particular healing, as well as the one which follows in the next text, is not found recorded in the other Gospels.

I. Jesus Opens the Eyes of the Blind

“When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’” (Vs. 27)

Apparently, two blind men had heard about what the Lord had just done in raising Jairus’s daughter from the dead. And so, as the Lord moves on, they follow after Him hoping to get His attention, thinking that He might also be able to miraculously provide them with sight. Being without any sight, they repeatedly scream aloud, “Son of David, have mercy on us,” with the hope that He might stop and respond to their desperate cries.

Now, before we move on to consider what happens next, let me just note a few important factors that stand out here:

1) Consider the plight of these blind men. To this end, we note the natural condition of these blind men, which is obvious to us in theory, but very hard to appreciate from a practical standpoint, especially during that time period. At the very basic level, I am sure that I don’t have to convince you of the immense, precious value of having sight. We tend to take our vision for granted, don’t we? But, is not one of your greatest natural fears to lose your sight? Is not your sight one of the last senses you would ever forfeit, if you were given the choice to lose any certain number of your senses. [Ill: When I was hit in the eye with a baseball - 2 weeks blind]

Now, adding salt to the wound of the already debilitating circumstances, during the time that the Lord walked the earth, the blind were often looked down upon as “less than’s.” Many would have even linked blindness to some direct sin on the part of the individual or the individual’s family. Recall the question which the Lord’s disciples asked Him in John 9:2, when they came upon a different blind man. There, we are told, “Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” And of course, Jesus, correcting the false assumption of the day, responded, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him” (vs. 3). And so, blind individuals were more despised than even pitied. It’s no wonder that on another occasion, where a blind man repeatedly yells out, “Son of David, have mercy on me,” people from the crowd heartlessly order him to shut up!

Finally, unlike today, where we have lots of programs and technological aids available to help service those who are blind (including “seeing-eye” dogs, Helen Keller Society...etc), no such programs and aids existed in that day. Today, a blind individual can get a job even. Back then, when you were blind, basically your entire life was given over to begging on the streets and near the temple. That was your full-time job, and you were fortunate to collect enough alms to take care of your basic needs. There were no additional enjoyments to be experienced. You simply lived to be living. And so, I say all of this to simply give us a basic understanding of the desperate plight of the blind men. Their ailment went beyond the great physical discomfort, adding dejection, condescension and life-long begging to the roster. And as far as the possibility of their receiving their sight back, it is worth noting that there is not a single place in all of the Old Testament where we find a blind man being healed. And so, on top of all else, the prognosis was not too promising for those who were born blind, or who had, at some point, lost their sight.

2) One other noteworthy factor that ought to be pointed out (before we move on), is the use of the phrase “Son of David,” to describe Jesus, as the blind men desperately call out to the Lord. This title is, indeed, significant, and while we have already considered this matter in the past, it bears briefly repeating now. It is important to recognize that these blind men are not simply attempting to bring some random attention to the Lord’s genealogical heritage when they make this statement. Everyone present; any Jewish person of that time, would have understood

that these blind men, by calling Jesus, “Son of David,” were in essence calling Him the Messiah. No one questioned the fact that God had specifically promised David that the Messiah would come through his loins. Who that Davidic Messiah would be, of course, was a mystery to be revealed. Well here, these blind men, ironically, were able *to see* what even the highly educated, religious leaders of the day, could not see. They knew that Jesus was the coming King, who would ultimately reign forever on David’s throne.

And so, they humbly honor the Lord with that glorious, and very appropriate title, hailing him the true King of the Jews, of David’s Seed, and in accordance with Biblical prophecy. And they appeal to Him for mercy (literally, for “pity”), not only on the basis of the power that He had exhibited already, but furthermore, in accordance with the legitimate authority He had as the Messianic, Davidic King! Notice, unlike so many in our day, they didn’t view themselves as having some inherent natural right to access His power and benefit. They knew that if they were to receive what they desired, then it had to be wholly on the basis of the free grace and compassion of their King. And so, they appeal to Him unto this end. They repeatedly bring their appeal to their Lord and King, hoping, as it were, that like King Ahasuerus did with Esther, He might lower His scepter and freely receive them. With that said, let us then move on to ponder what happens next.

“And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’” (Vs. 28).

At some point, Jesus enters another house, the details of which, we are not told. But apparently, He had turned into this house, specifically with the intent of meeting with these blind men. And based on what we are told at the end of the text, it would seem that Jesus was especially attempting to deal with these men in a private setting, not wanting to draw additional public attention to Himself, at this point (we will address this further shortly). And so, the blind men then come to Jesus in the house. And when they come to Jesus, He asks them an interesting and critical question. “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

Now, why does He ask them this? It would seem that their actions up to this point would confirm that they did, in fact, believe, right? While this is true, here we are reminded of the important emphasis upon “faith,” which is the one necessary condition that God requires of man,

if he is to freely receive His benefits. For, without faith, it is impossible to please God. Now, where that faith actually comes from, is a topic for another sermon, but suffice it to say for now, that God never offers His blessings on the basis of any form of merit, coming from His creatures. In fact, we ultimately have nothing to offer God. We are naturally contaminated because of the curse of sin, and all of our good works are as filthy rags in the sight of our Holy God. Indeed, He provides everything that is needed, in Christ, to supply us with every spiritual blessing. That said, it is through the vehicle of faith, that God dispenses His blessings upon His people. And that faith may even be very weak at times; it may be as a mustard seed, but it must “be” nonetheless. We saw this last time, when the Lord lovingly charged Jairus not to allow the news of his daughter’s death to shake his faith. [Read Luke 8:49-50]

And we see this general pattern, displayed all throughout the gospels, don’t we? Remember, when the paralytic was lowered through the roof of the house to Jesus (by some men), because a large crowd was blocking the entranceway (Matt. 9:1-8)? What were we told there? When Jesus saw “their faith,” He said to the man, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” [Note: the woman w/issue of blood also]

From the very beginning of time, when God commanded Adam not to eat of the forbidden tree, and through virtually every event recorded in Scripture following that event, we find this important emphasis that God places on the need for His creatures to have faith in Him, His Word, and all of His promises given therein. And that continues to be the heart of the matter today. Indeed, *from the standpoint of God*, what ultimately separates everyone in this room, into two (and only two) distinct classes, is not race or gender or financial status, or anything else derived from man-emphasized categories, but this one matter: You either believe God in truth, or you don’t. You either have faith in Christ or you don’t. Now, the reality of that faith will be evidenced in concrete ways, but from the standpoint of man, it always comes down to the issue of having an inward, subjective faith, in an outward God and His objective truth. To be sure, faith in itself is useless, unless it is latched onto the proper object, which is Christ, but a biblical faith (to this end) is indeed most essential. Proverbs 3:5-6, sums it up real well, doesn’t it, teaching us that our faith ought to be such, that God is trusted even over our own senses and emotions. When things seem not to make sense, or when God is questioned in any circumstance

that arises; when the Red Sea is right in front of us and the enemies of God are pursuing us from behind, we are yet called to, “Trust in the Lord *with all of our hearts*, and to lean not on our own understanding. In all of your ways, acknowledge Him, [being confident that] He will direct your paths.”

And so, here, Jesus asks these blind men, in a context where the blind had never received their sight before, “Do you *really* believe that I am able to do this?” “Do you really believe that I am *the* Son of David, the One who would come and reign forever on the throne of David, crushing the head of the serpent and granting life to all who believe?” And they respond, “Yes, Lord.” “Yes, Lord, although we cannot presently see you with the eyes of our flesh, we can see you with the eyes of our faith. We believe!”

And again, emphasizing the importance of faith, and proving that the faith of these two blind men was genuine, we are told in verses 29-30a, “Then He (Jesus) touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” And their eyes were opened.” Now, when our Lord says, “according to your faith let it be to you,” it is important to understand that He is not saying that their sight would improve in accordance with the measure of how much faith they had. So that, for example, maybe one of the blind men, exhibiting more faith than the other, received 20/20 vision, and the other only received 20/60, because he had struggled with some level of doubt. No, He simply means that, even as they have exhibited a true faith in Him, small as it might be at this point, let their sight be restored fully. The emphasis is not upon *how much* faith they had, but on the fact that they had some faith, and that He would graciously heal them, because of that. Even a struggling faith; even a small, but genuine faith, in so great a Savior, will lay hold of Him, finding Him ready to graciously respond. And thank the Lord for that, brethren! I know that when I go back to my conversion, I now cringe over the quality and measure of faith I had, when I cried out to the Lord. But, thanks be unto God, that rather than rejecting me or belittling me because of my gross imperfection, He yet, showered His full and complete restorative love upon me. He intended to build on that little mustard seed, and He still does to this very day. May we remember that, brethren, when working with new believers, lest we overwhelm them with expectations that are simply beyond their grasp at that point. Never despise the day of small things. For, God can build entire cities out of broken and inadequate

materials. How many times did the Lord say to His own Apostles, who would serve to lay the very foundation of His glorious church, “O you of little faith.”

And so, the eyes of these men were opened, and praise be unto God that probably the first thing they saw, was their blessed Savior! But then, finally, Jesus gives them a warning, which we find dispersed throughout the Gospels, and especially in the Gospel of Mark. “And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, “See that no one knows it.” Again, the Lord had taken them into the privacy of a home, so that, a public commotion would not ensue. And prior to this, when He raised Jairus’s daughter (after putting everyone out of the room, but the parents and a few of His disciples), He commanded them strictly to tell no one. What was this secrecy all about? Well, I believe that it centers upon the same issue, related to His later charge to His disciples (at Caesarea Philippi), not to tell anyone that He was the Christ, following Peter’s great confession. The Lord had a mission in mind, which no one else understood at this point, and He wanted nothing to hinder His focus. The people were expecting a Messianic King who would immediately defeat the Romans and reign physically upon the throne of David, in the present. But, what they couldn’t grasp was that the Messiah had to die. What they couldn’t grasp was that their greatest enemy and their harshest bondage was to their own sin. Rome didn’t separate mankind from God. Sin did. And so, He was set to offer Himself as a substitutionary offering, on behalf of His people, so that, He might free them from their true and most heinous bondage. And then, He would build His church, by calling the lost, through His Apostles, to be united to Him by faith, so that, they would be freed from the penalty and power of their sins, and be reconciled to God. And once this mission, the building of His church, was complete, then He would return, and consummate His glorious Kingdom.

And so, for now, He didn’t want to stir up a conflict with Rome, as the people would strive to force Him to be their King. The publicity of His miracles was already compelling some to do this. And so, He wanted to keep things quiet, until His mission was complete. That said, it often didn’t go in accordance with His desire, compelling Him to leave cities and to hide Himself away at times. In verse 31, we are told, “But when they (the blind men) had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.” In their excitement, the blind men failed to

honor the Lord's stern command, making matters more difficult for Him, limiting His freedom to move around comfortably.

II. Closing Thoughts

Once again, we find this physical sign which our Lord performed, clearly representing a spiritual reality which Matthew would especially have us consider. And this is the reality of "spiritual" blindness, which pervades fallen humanity. Often times, this spiritual blindness can also be referred to as "hard heartedness." To this end, in closing, I want to consider this reality from both a Christian and a non-Christian standpoint.

1) From a Christian standpoint. Brethren, it is important to recognize that while we have been born again in Christ, and while our spiritual eyes have been opened by the Gospel, at times, we can yet, harden ourselves against the truth. To this end, we can say that, at times, we revert back to our carnal vision. And we want to be both aware and cautious of this reality.

[See Mark 6:45-52 & Mark 8:13-21 - The call to reflect upon and pray over God's evident work in our lives, lest we forget and actually harden our hearts]

This being the case, and without removing our responsibility to continue to walk closely with the Lord, thanks be unto God that such short-sightedness doesn't equal complete blindness, which is descriptive of the sad and terrible state of the unbeliever.

2) If you are outside of Christ; if you are not a true Christian, as defined by and displayed all throughout Scripture, the Bible classifies you as spiritually blind. In other words, as the blind man was to physical reality, you are to God and spiritual reality. And believe it or not, your condition is far worse. The damage caused by physical blindness is limited to this life. Spiritual blindness incurs eternal consequences.

Friend, if you are still living in your sin, and if you are still rejecting Christ as your Lord and Savior, please understand that your unbelief carries with it, eternal consequences. You must understand that your sins against God; your rebellion against, and your rejection of your Creator is laying up for you an eternal weight of wrath, which you must and will bear. If you don't see your desperate condition; if you are not driven to repentance and to crying out "Son of David have mercy on me," you will bear the full weight of condemnation that is due your sins. You are

living in a perpetual state of spiritual blindness, in the present, but you can only hide from your conscience for so long. You will stand before God. You will face the One whom you avoid in the present. He who is presently unseen to you, you will behold at the final judgment. And when you walk through the grave, which is coming quickly for all of us, you will give an account for how you have lived this short life.

Consider this illustration for a moment, as a testimony of your lack of faith. What if you knew right now that a nuclear bomb was heading to Long Island, as I speak, and you would have very little time to get far enough away from it, before it hits. And what if you knew that it couldn't be stopped? What would you do? Would you continue living life as you have before? No, you would flee from here right away, probably leaving most of your belongings behind. Life is that precious to you, isn't it? And material things mean so little, when your very life is on the line. [Ill. The Titanic]

Well, God has promised that you will stand before Him in the judgment. And your death draws nearer and nearer by the day. And you may face it much sooner than you think. And if you are not ready; if you die, there is no turning back at that point. There is no Gospel for the dead! Ought that not to compel you to urgently flee to Christ, right now, with not a moment to spare?!

You see, but you have hope right now! You can be saved from your sins and reconciled to God forever! You can be delivered from your present darkness, because Jesus is the Light of the world. He provides all of the light you need to find Him and to draw near to Him in truth! His Word is full of light! Seek Him now, before it is too late! Don't remain in your blind state, which only leads to eternal condemnation! [The Gospel!!!]

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25