

Matthew 9F

- As we come to the end of our year, it's appropriate that we also reach the end of Matthew's two-chapter section on the miracles of Jesus in the Galilee
 - We're at the end of Chapter 9, at Matthew's final group of three miracles, which center on Jesus' power to restore
 - In fact, we can sum up all of Jesus' ministry as a mission of restoration, or we could say, reconciliation
 - Paul puts it this way

[Col. 1:19](#) For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, [Col. 1:20](#) and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

- Through His atoning death on the cross, Jesus reconciles or restores everything back to the state where it was meant to be, apart from the devastating effects of sin
 - He reconciles fallen humanity to fellowship with God
 - He restores peace to the eternal realm by defeating the enemy
 - And He returns the fallen earth back to a perfect, created state
- So Matthew demonstrates Jesus' divinity by showing us Jesus' power to restore or reconcile all things through three situations
 - We've already studied Jesus' first and second miracles in this group, which were intertwined into a single story
 - Jesus restored normal life to a woman to who had been ostracized from Jewish society because of constant bleeding
 - And then He restored life to a young girl who had died
- As you stand back and look at those first two examples, you find a pattern emerging across the three miracles in this final group
 - The final group of miracles illustrates Jesus' restoring and reconciling His Creation from the damage done by sin

- The Bible says that sin produced three major consequences for mankind
- Sin separated humanity from fellowship with God, it put all humanity under a sentence of death, and it blinded us to understanding spiritual truth
- Since everyone descends from Adam, we enter the world in a state of sin, which means we all begin life suffering these three conditions
 - But by faith in Jesus Christ, these conditions can be reversed or restored
 - And the three miracles in this last group illustrate Jesus' power to rectify each consequence by His atoning death
- Like the woman who was ostracized from Jewish life, Jesus puts an end to our separation from God, making us clean and restoring fellowship
 - And like the young girl, our faith in Jesus removes the curse of death, so that we may be resurrected into eternal life
 - And as we will see today, Jesus corrects our spiritual blindness, granting us spiritual knowledge
 - And today, we move to the final miracle in this group, one that demonstrates how Jesus restores our spiritual insight
 - And what better way to illustrate that power than through a healing of blind men
- But to understand this final example, we need to do some mental juggling tonight
 - As you've heard me explain in the past, the events of this final group take place later in time than the earlier groups of miracles
 - Specifically, these three miracles happened soon after the events of Chapter 12
 - We know this, because all three of these miracles follow a pattern that isn't present for the previous miracles
 - First, in all three cases, Jesus only agrees to grant a miracle after the person demonstrates faith in Him
 - Faith in Him had become a prerequisite for receiving His mercy, which is something Jesus never required before

- Secondly, Jesus directs those He heals to keep His work secret, which is the exact opposite of what Jesus has said in the past
 - These changes in Jesus' ministry were a response to certain events that take place in Chapter 12
 - When we get to Chapter 12, we'll gain a full understanding of this change and its significance to Jesus' ministry
 - In the meantime, we need to keep in mind that the miracles in Matthew's final group all happened after the moment in Chapter 12
 - Knowing this will be particularly important today
- For now, we're ready to dive into the final miracle of Matthew's three groups

[Matt. 9:27](#) As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

[Matt. 9:28](#) When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."

[Matt. 9:29](#) Then He touched their eyes, saying, "It shall be done to you according to your faith."

[Matt. 9:30](#) And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them: "See that no one knows about this!"

[Matt. 9:31](#) But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout all that land.

- As Jesus went along, two blind men followed Him, crying out for healing
 - Now interestingly, Jesus doesn't respond to their request immediately
 - Jesus doesn't talk to the men until v.28, when Jesus eventually enters a house
 - So Jesus continued walking to His destination for some time, as the men pursued Him, yelling for mercy
 - Given that they were blind, it must have been a challenge for them to keep up with Jesus
 - Perhaps they followed the noise of the crowd or, in desperation, they clung to those at the edge of the moving gaggle
 - But then finally, as Jesus reaches the home (probably to eat a meal), the blind men catch up with Him and eventually receive what they wanted

- Jesus consents to healing them, but only after they confess faith in Him
- But this outcome begs a question...why did Jesus ignore the blind men's requests as they walked, only to heal them later?
- If Jesus was inclined to heal them, why make them wait to receive it?
- And why did He make faith a prerequisite for Him to heal them?
- The answer is connected, again, to the events of Chapter 12
 - The short answer is, Jesus needed to understand if they were following Him in faith before He performed the miracle
 - But understanding how these men came to that understanding is the real issue in this story
 - In fact, it's impossible to understand this situation fully, without knowing what these men had experienced prior to this moment
- So we need to look at another moment in Mathew's gospel, and this is where the mental juggling I mentioned earlier comes in
 - We're going to piece together several scenes to fully understand what's happening here
 - Beginning with a quick visit to Chapter 12:22

[Matt. 12:22](#) Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw.

[Matt. 12:23](#) All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

- At a point in Chapter 12, Jesus casts out a demon from a man who had been made mute by the demon's presence
- This healing in Chapter 12 takes place immediately *before* the one we're studying now in Chapter 9
- As Jesus performs this miracle, the crowd who witnessed this event wondered aloud whether Jesus was the Son of David
 - "The Son of David" is a term from the Old Testament that means the Messiah

- The Bible tells us that the Messiah, when He came, would descend from the family line of David
- So Jews began referring to the coming Messiah as the Son of David
- So the crowd began using a Messianic term to describe Jesus, which means something they saw caused them to consider that Jesus might be the Messiah
 - It was the miracle of casting out a mute demon that led them to that realization
 - But at the same time, Jesus' unassuming appearance left them in some doubt about their conclusion
 - So they ask their religious leaders...this can't be the Son of David, can it?
- Now what was it about that miracle that persuaded the crowd to consider that Jesus could be the Messiah?
 - Well, think about to the beginning of Chapter 8, to the first miracle in that chapter, the miracle of healing a leper...
 - I told you then, that in all Israel's history since the giving of the Law, there was no record a Jew having been healed of leprosy
 - Yet curiously, Leviticus 13 gives Israel instructions on how to deal with a leper who is healed
 - So the Law anticipated the healing of leper, yet no Jewish leper had ever been healed, which led rabbis in Israel to seek an explanation
 - Eventually, the rabbis determined that the Lord must have reserved certain miracles for His Messiah to perform when He comes
 - Remember, miracles in general were not unprecedented in Israel
 - Men like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha had been anointed by God to perform miraculous signs, including raising dead bodies to life
 - But when Messiah came, He would possess even greater powers, abilities God had never given to any other person
 - Their observations lead us to the concept of Messianic miracles...
unique miracles God reserved exclusively for the Messiah to perform

- These special miracles, called Messianic miracles, would serve to validate His claim to being Messiah, since they would be unprecedented
- One of these miracles was healing a leper, and another would be casting out a mute demon
- Now at this point, you're probably naturally wondering why healing a mute demon was considered a Messianic miracle
- And the answer to that question awaits us in Chapter 12
- For now, just focus on the crowd's reaction to Jesus' miracle
 - It's clear they understand the significance of Jesus casting out a mute demon
 - They immediately begin asking their religious authorities if Jesus was truly the Messiah, as the miracle would suggest
- This same event happened a second time with similar results, which we can see if we jump to the final miracle at the end of Chapter 9

Matt. 9:32 As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him.

Matt. 9:33 After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."

Matt. 9:34 But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

- We're still coming back to the healing of the two blind men
 - But I need us to do a little more mental juggling, so we can understand the situation of these blind men
 - In this final example in Chapter 9, we find Jesus casting out a mute demon again
 - This is the same type of miracle Jesus performs in Chapter 12, but it's a different moment than the one in Chapter 12
 - This is a second example of Jesus casting out a mute demon, and this one happened *after* the one in Chapter 12, chronologically
 - In fact, this miracle is technically not part of Matthew's final group of miracles

- In Chapters 8 & 9, Matthew gave us three groups of three miracles
 - And on either side of those groups, Matthew adds a Messianic miracle: the healing of a leper at the beginning and the healing of a mute demon at the end
 - These two Messianic miracles serve as bookends, reinforcing Matthew's main point, that Jesus is Israel's Messiah
- So as we saw in Chapter 12, as Jesus performs this Messianic miracle, the crowd realizes it's seen something special
 - And in response, in v.33, the crowd exclaims that nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel
 - Once again, they acknowledge the unique importance of this miracle and they come to the unavoidable conclusion: Jesus is the Messiah
 - This was the proof their rabbis had told them to expect
- Yet ironically, those same rabbi's opposed Jesus' claims to being Messiah
 - Jesus had denied the authority of their Mishnah rule book, so they have set their hearts against Him
 - But now, Jesus has performed a Messianic miracle, and the crowd is ready to accept Jesus' claims
 - So the Pharisees found themselves in a corner, needing a way to explain away a miracle that proves Jesus was the Messiah
- In v.34, they tell the crowd that Jesus was operating with Satan's power
 - They couldn't deny the miracle happened...everyone saw it...so they dismissed it as Satan's sorcery, rather than a work of God
 - The Pharisees offer the same excuse in Chapter 12, and we'll explore the significance of their response when we get there
- But for now, here's what we've learned
 - Jesus performed an important sign, a Messianic miracle, and the crowds who were present recognized it
 - The first time He performs it, the crowds respond by wondering aloud, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

- The second time He performs the miracle, the crowd testifies that such a thing had never been done before in Israel
- In both cases, the crowds testify Jesus is the Messiah, yet the religious leaders deny it, declaring that Jesus was empowered by Satan
- And in at least one of those crowds, stood these two blind men
 - They couldn't see what's happening, of course, so they didn't witness Jesus' miracle first-hand
 - But they hear the mute man speaking for the first time
 - And they hear the crowd murmuring to one another, asking whether the Messiah has finally come?
 - And they hear the Pharisees answering the crowd by denying the meaning of the sign
- And in the midst of it all, they heard that one phrase, "the Son of David"
 - Now like all Jews of that day, these men knew that phrase was a title for the Messiah
 - And instantly, they saw everything clearly
- So they seize upon the title and begin using it to call out to Jesus
 - In v.27, we're told that as they go along, they call out to Jesus, saying "Son of David, Son of David", trying to get His attention
 - What did these blind men see that the seeing crowd didn't?
 - Why did they embrace Jesus as Messiah, when the rest of the crowd wouldn't?
- The answer is, their blindness gave them the advantage
 - The Bible says faith is a conviction in things not seen, which is particularly appropriate in the case of these two men
 - There are two ways to find truth: by sight or by faith
 - Sight is the Bible's way of referring to our intellect, our knowledge gained by study, investigation and evaluation of facts and circumstances

- It's doesn't just refer to what we see, but to everything a human being can know through firsthand experience
- The second way to know something is by faith
 - Faith is an assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen
 - It means accepting as true something we cannot know by firsthand experience, but must accept on the basis of testimony
 - So we receive as true, a testimony that we did not experience personally
 - And in the matter of salvation, faith means accepting as true, the testimony of the Bible when it declares Jesus is the Messiah
- Because of their blindness, these two men had no choice but to evaluate truth on the basis of faith, rather than by sight
 - Consider how difficult that must have been for them...they couldn't see the miracles Jesus was performing
 - All they had was the testimony of the crowd, balanced against the testimony of the Pharisees
 - Yet somehow, on the basis of that testimony, these men came to place their faith in Jesus
- Once again, how did these men arrive at an understanding that eluded the rest of the crowd?
 - The answer is, they had heard another testimony as well...the testimony of the Word of God
 - We know this, because as they enter the home with Jesus, He asks them one question: do you believe I am able to do this?
 - Notice, Jesus doesn't ask if they believe He is the Messiah, nor does He ask if they believe God can heal them
 - He asks, "Do you believe I can do this?"; meaning do you believe I have the power of God to heal
 - Obviously, Jesus is asking whether they believe He is the Messiah, but His question is alluding to a prophecy concerning the Messiah

- He's asking if they agree with the testimony of Scripture, with a prophecy in Isaiah, related to His earlier miracle of healing the mute man
- In Isaiah, we read this concerning the coming Messiah

Is. 29:19 The afflicted also will increase their gladness in the LORD,
And the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

Is. 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

Is. 35:6 Then the lame will leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.
For waters will break forth in the wilderness
And streams in the Arabah.

- The Word of God declared to Israel that the coming of the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah, would be accompanied by miraculous healings
 - Deaf ears would be unstopped, blind eyes would be opened
 - And notice, Isaiah also says that the mute would be made to shout for joy
- So these two blind men couldn't see Jesus, nor the miracles He was performing, but they had working ears
 - And those ears heard two things that testified to them that Jesus was the Messiah
 - First, they heard the Word of God taught in the synagogues
 - They heard the prophecies of the Messiah and they took them to heart
 - Secondly, they heard the mouth of that mute man begin to speak after Jesus performed the Messianic miracle
- And they placed their faith in these two testimonies
 - They believed in the Word of God when it testified the Messiah would make mute men speak and would give sight to the blind
 - And they believed the testimony of the man who declared Jesus had removed a demon and restored his voice

- What they couldn't know by sight, they accepted by faith, and so they called out to Jesus as the Son of David
- So when Jesus asks them His question, "Do you believe I am able to do this?", He's asking, "Do you believe in the Word of God concerning the Messiah?"
 - You heard I cast out the mute demon, and you know what the Word says about such things, so do you believe I can also make the blind see also?
 - It was the quintessential test of faith...to accept the testimony of the Word of God, without relying on sight
 - And to that question, the blind men respond "yes", and so Jesus touches their eyes, saying it shall be done according to your faith
 - Meaning that because they believed the Word when it says the Messiah will open eyes, He would do so for them
 - These men saw what the crowd couldn't see, but it wasn't a matter of eyesight...it came down to spiritual insight, granted by God
 - Jesus gave these men the ability to see spiritual truths that the crowd couldn't see
 - The crowd could witness Jesus' miracles clearly, but they rejected the meaning of the sign, because they didn't perceive the truth of God's Word
 - Meanwhile, two blind men who couldn't see what Jesus did, nevertheless recognized its significance, because they accepted the Word of God by faith
 - In their example, we find the third and final illustration of Jesus' ministry to restore the effects of sin
 - Humanity's sin nature robs us of the capacity to receive and understand spiritual truth
 - When Adam disobeyed the Word of God, his spiritual nature became corrupt and he lost the ability to perceive spiritual truth
 - That same defect has been passed down to all humanity, so that we all begin life ignorant of God and without hope to find Him on our own
- The Bible describes this defect as a spiritual blindness

[2 Cor. 4:3](#) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
[2 Cor. 4:4](#) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- The truth of the Gospel, that is of Jesus as Messiah, is a truth that cannot be accepted by humanity in our natural state, Paul says
 - Because our very nature is a barrier to receiving that truth...we are spiritually blind at birth
 - Furthermore, we are separated from God by our sin, so we cannot learn of God by "sight", that is, a firsthand knowledge of Him
- Therefore, we can only come to understand God by accepting the testimony of Him given in the Word of God
 - The Bible says that this understanding is given to us by God's Spirit, Who is the One teaching us the truth of God

[1 Cor. 2:12](#) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,
[1 Cor. 2:13](#) which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

- Paul says spiritual truth can only be spiritually appraised
 - He's saying that if you want to learn about things of this world, you can rely on physical sight
 - But if you want to learn about eternal things, you must rely on spiritual sight
 - And that insight comes only from God's Word, taught by the Spirit
- That was the difference between that crowd and those two blind men
 - Because of their blindness, they had no choice but to rely on the testimony of God's Word, because they had nothing else to draw upon
 - Like the crowd, these men recognized the meaning of Jesus' miracle; but unlike the crowd, they didn't evaluate Jesus' appearance

- And they didn't see a lowly carpenter's son, a man without stature and accomplishment in Israel, a man despised by the religious leaders
- These men had to rely on what they heard
- Their sight did not get in the way of seeing God's truth
- In a sense, we could say the crowd's ability to see with their eyes prevented them from seeing with spiritual insight
 - What they could see didn't impress them very much
 - Which is why they phrase their response in the form of a question, "This cannot be the Son of David, can he?"
 - What they saw with their eyes didn't agree with what they perceived in the spirit, and in the end, they went with their eyes
- Signs and wonders are certainly captivating, and God uses them from time to time to get our attention
 - But they cannot replace a knowledge of Him by faith in the testimony of His Word
 - And in many cases, signs can lead us away from the truth, especially when we are determined to walk by sight
 - Certainly, this is the pattern for the unbelieving world who, like this crowd, refuse to accept the testimony of the Word, preferring to believe in only what they see
- But this same problem can persist in the life of believers, who though they have accepted Jesus by faith in the Word of God, nevertheless try to follow Christ by sight
 - Classically, this problem takes two forms: seeking experiences over truth, and placing greater trust in this world over the next
 - In the first case, we're talking about believers who gravitate toward groups and individuals who offer spectacle and power
 - Sometimes, it's (supposed) miracles or it's church services with carefully orchestrated pageantry or individuals with powerful personas: these things captivate the believer and become their truth

- They aren't searching the scriptures for truth...they're relying on sight and emotion...and the enemy easily manipulates these things to pull believers away from the truth
- In the second case, we're talking about centering our life goals on achievements in this world, rather than on positioning ourselves for the next
 - When we walk by sight, this world is the only thing real to us, because our eyes tell us it's real
 - And certainly, it's real for a time...but the Word of God says it won't last forever
- But walking by faith means devoting ourselves to the cause of the Kingdom
 - The Kingdom can't be seen yet, but Scripture testifies that it is real and coming very soon
 - So, living by faith means placing greater emphasis on the reality of the world we cannot see, rather than the one we can
- When you place your faith in Jesus, He restores your ability to perceive these spiritual truths, and He empowers you to live according to them
 - But we can only gain the benefit of these truths if we apply them
 - And applying them is a process of denying ourselves and yielding to the Spirit
- That's what Jesus asked of these men...that they believe in the Word of God
 - And that's why this church was started, barely 11 months ago
 - Because we want to be a place where the people of God encounter the Word of God in a consistent and meaningful way
 - So that in time, as we're exposed to spiritual truths that are often overlooked in other churches, we might grow in our walk of faith
 - And as we grow in faith, we are being prepared for a Kingdom to come
 - As we enter a new year, would you give some time to reflecting on how you're walking through life?
 - Are you walking by faith, trusting in the testimony of God's Word, or by sight, distracted by this world?

- Perhaps you find a walk of faith difficult or impossible...
 - Maybe it's because you don't know the Jesus of the Bible
 - Or perhaps you know Jesus as Savior, but you don't know much about His Word
 - In either case, if that's you, then you've come to the right place... because in this place, we will teach you about Jesus and we will teach you His Word
 - Walk with us as we walk by faith with Jesus, and let's all get ready for the Kingdom together