

# HEALING THE BLIND MEN

July 27, 2014  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Revision F

## Gospel: Matthew 9:27-35

Today's Gospel lesson begins by focusing on two men who were not very well off physically, but who were strong in the Faith. The two blind men, whose only lot in life was begging, kept crying out as they followed Jesus (i.e. following the noise of the crowd), "Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 9:27). This expression indicates that they recognized Jesus as Messiah. John Chrysostom stated<sup>1</sup> that the prophets also used the term "Son of David" when addressing the king, whom they wished to honor and declare great (compare Isaiah 37:35). Jesus allowed the blind men to continue crying out to Him along the way as He traveled to the house He was to stay at that evening.

The blind men had confident faith that Jesus was able to restore their sight (Matthew 9:28). As Jesus healed the two blind men, he said, "According to your faith, let it be done to you" (Matthew 9:29). This miracle followed immediately the raising of Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43, Luke 8:40-56) where Jairus, the synagogue ruler, was a little shakier in his faith and had to be encouraged by Jesus (Mark 5:35-36).

## According to Our Faith

We might ask, why did Jesus put the blind men off for so long? The two blind men had followed Jesus from Jairus' house (Matthew 9:25-26) to the house where He was staying (Matthew 9:28). This must have been quite an ordeal for two blind men. He didn't even address their request until He was within the privacy of the house. Thus He drew out their faith like He did that of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:25-30).

John Chrysostom stated<sup>2</sup> that Jesus was "teaching us utterly to repel the glory that comes from the multitude. Because the house was close by, he led them there to heal them in private. And this is evident from the fact that He charged them to tell no one" (Matthew 9:30).

"But this is no light charge against the Jewish leaders. These two men, though their eyes were struck out, received the Faith by hearing alone; but the Jewish leaders, beholding the miracles and having their sight to witness what was happening, do just the contrary".

Chrysostom compared<sup>3</sup> the faith the Lord asked of the blind men with the faith He asked of the paralytic, where He did not ask for any faith. But the paralytic acquired faith afterward.

"But why did Jesus not require faith of the paralytic (John 5:5-9), as He did in the case of the blind men, when He said, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' (Matthew 9:28) It was because the paralytic did not yet know who He was (John 5:12-13). For persons who had seen His power exerted on others, He

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<sup>1</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 1.

<sup>2</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII,

<sup>3</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXVII, 2.

might say this to them. Those, who had not yet learned who He was, but who were to know afterwards by means of signs, end up acquiring faith after the miracles”.

Irenaeus noted<sup>4</sup> that there is a correlation between our faith and our free will. We have to want it, like the blind men, and this part is under our own power. If we reject it, like the Jewish leaders, it is not forced upon us.

“Not merely in works, but also in faith, has God preserved the will of man free and under his own control, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you’ (Matthew 9:29). He thus shows that there is a faith especially belonging to man, since he has an opinion especially his own. And again, ‘All things are possible to him who believes’ (Mark 9:23); and, ‘Go your way; as you have believed, so let it be done for you’ (Matthew 8:13). Now all such expressions demonstrate that man is in his own power with respect to faith. And for this reason, ‘He that believes in Him has eternal life, while he who does not believe the Son shall not see eternal life, but the wrath of God shall remain on him’ (John 3:36). In the same manner therefore the Lord both showed to Jerusalem His own goodness, and indicated that man is in his own free will and his own power. ‘How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Therefore your house shall be left to you desolate’” (Matthew 23:37-38).

Clement of Alexandria stated<sup>5</sup> that the reward that we receive at the Resurrection is in proportion to our faith now. The darkness of ignorance blinds us to the truth of faith, but the illumination we receive is the knowledge of faith.

Jerome stated<sup>6</sup> that just as the Lord seldom found a strong faith, such as the centurion (Matthew 8:10) or the woman with the flow of blood for twelve years (Matthew 9:22), so it was in his day. Instead of a faith that cleanses his heart and clings to the Cross, he often found his mind drifting onto base thoughts, the mere mention of which would make him blush. From this point of view, he felt that if it were done unto him according to his faith, he would perish. Thus this life is a struggle from beginning to end.

“Let everyone commune with his own heart, and he will find throughout the whole of life how rare a thing it is to find a soul so faithful that it does nothing through the love of glory, nothing on account of the petty gossip of men. For he who fasts does not as an immediate consequence fast unto God, nor does he who holds out his hand to a poor man, lend to the Lord. Vice is next-door neighbor to virtue. It is hard to rest content with God alone for judge”.

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<sup>4</sup> Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxxvii, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, I, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Jerome, “The Dialogue Against the Luciferians”, 15, Treatises.

## Healing by the Power of Beelzebub?

The Pharisees accused Jesus of using the power of demons to do what He did (Matthew 9:34). On another occasion, they said that He cast out demons by Ba'alzebul<sup>7</sup>, the ruler of the demons (Luke 11:15).

One might wonder why they thought that Jesus was using demonic power to do what He did. Why did that occur to them? We can see their reasoning from the historical context. At another occasion, Jesus had claimed to be the Light of the world (John 8:12), and God, Who had come down from heaven (John 8:23-30, 3:13, 6:51-58). This is very similar to what Simon<sup>8</sup> Magus (Acts 8:9-23) said about himself 50 miles away in Samaria. Four years later, when Peter encountered Simon Magus, everyone in Samaria believed that Simon was "the great power of God" (Acts 8:10) because of all the incredible "miracles" that he had performed. Simon, who had been a follower of John the Baptist, learned sorcery in Egypt and used illusions and magic tricks to make it seem that he was performing miracles. The Jewish leaders were unable to see through Simon's "miracles", and assumed that he and Jesus were both in league with demons. About a year later, Jewish leaders again accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebub. They said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (John 8:48) Jesus said this was blasphemy on their part (Matthew 12:24-37, Luke 11:15-26).

John Chrysostom noted<sup>9</sup> Jesus' response to the blasphemy of the Jewish leaders. He showed them that He knew what they were thinking, but He didn't rebuke them harshly. He left it to their conscience to convict them. His aim was to bring them to the truth, and He showed great kindness to His enemies in doing so.

"They had accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, but He did not rebuke them. He allowed them both to know His power by His more numerous miracles, and to learn His majesty by His teaching. When they continued saying the same, He proceeded to rebuke them, first by showing His Godhead, that He made their secrets public; and secondly, by the very act of casting out the demons with ease".

"Because of the exceeding impudence of such a suspicion, and because of the fear of the multitude, they didn't dare make these charges publicly, but they were turning them in their mind. To show them that He knew all that, He did not put down the accusation, nor did He expose their wickedness. He added the refutation, leaving it to the conscience of those that said it to convict them. He was bent on one thing, to do good to them that were sinning, and not to expose them. Surely, if He had wanted to make them ridiculous, there was nothing to hinder Him. He put aside all these things, and had one object only: rendering them less contentious and more truthful, and so to make them more open toward amendment".

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<sup>7</sup> Ba'alzebul (Literally *Lord of the flies*) was the god of the Philistines of Ekron that Ahaziah sent messengers to inquire of about concerning his sickness and injury (2 Kings 1:2-16). When Elijah interfered with Ahaziah's plans, Ahaziah sent three successive companies of soldiers to arrest him. The first two companies were destroyed by fire from heaven, and the third commander begged Elijah to spare his life. Ahaziah never did get to inquire of Ba'alzebul before his death. Other similar names are Ba'alzebel (Lord of the dung), and Ba'alzeboul (Lord of the house).

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the Arch Heretic Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, [Simon Magus the Heresiarch](#), St Athanasius Press, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, [Homilies on Matthew](#), XLI, 1.

## Have Mercy on Us

Following the healing of the blind men, some un-named people brought Jesus a man who was mute and demon-possessed (Matthew 9:32). Jesus cast out the demon and by doing so He cured the muteness. This elicited the response from the crowd, “Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel!” (Matthew 9:33) From a similar crowd reaction in response to an act of faith by a paralytic’s friends (Mark 2:12), there may very well have been an act of faith on the part of those who brought the mute man to Jesus.

We notice that Jesus was very meek as he healed various people. He had just healed Jairus’ daughter privately (Matthew 9:25) and here he healed the two blind men privately, even asking them not to publish the results (Matthew 9:28-30). When the mute demoniac confronted him, He just cast the demon out. In doing this, He was teaching the Twelve and the Seventy how He wanted them to conduct themselves when He sent them out to do the same thing. Immediately following our Gospel lesson, Jesus sent the Twelve out two-by-two to heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons all by themselves (Matthew 10:1). He followed that by doing the same thing for the Seventy almost a year later (Luke 10).

For the Lord to conduct Himself in this manner is a good example of strength in weakness. He had emptied Himself at His Incarnation (Philippians 2:7) of the glory He had with the Father (John 17:5). And in His humble human condition, He went about healing parts of His creation that had been broken because of sin. And He asks us to take on the same humility, realizing that glory awaits us also as it did Him.

Jesus healed the two blind men in late 28 AD in Galilee. In early 30 AD, a few months before He was crucified, Jesus healed another pair of blind men near Jericho. They also cried out to Jesus as He passed by, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” (Matthew 20:29-34) Jerome applied<sup>10</sup> the wisdom of these blind men to our everyday life.

“Imitate those blind men for whose sake the Savior left His home and heritage and came to Jericho. They were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death when the light shone upon them (Matthew 4:15-16). When they learned that it was the Lord who was passing by they began to cry out saying: ‘Son of David, have mercy on us’ (Matthew 20:30). You too will have your sight restored, if you cry to Him, and cast away your filthy garments (Mark 10:50) at His call. ‘When you turn and bewail yourself then you shall be saved, and then you shall be able to see where you have been’. Let Him but touch your scars and pass his hands over your eyeballs. Although you may have been born blind from the womb (John 9:1) and although your mother may have conceived you in sin (John 9:2-3), he will purge you with hyssop and you shall be clean, he will wash you and you shall be whiter than snow (Psalm 51:5, 7).

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<sup>10</sup> Jerome, Letter to Sabinianus, CXLVII, 9.

*Panteleimon*  
**THE UNMERCENARY HEALERS**  
*Apostolic Work of Healing*  
*Demonstrating the Love of God*  
*Preparation for the Lord's Return*

See the Study for July 1, 2014