

Matthew 9 Commentary-C H Spurgeon

PREVIOUS

NEXT

MATTHEW 9:1-8 THE KING CONTINUES TO DISPLAY HIS ROYAL POWER

Matthew 9:1. And he entered into a ship, and passed over and came into his own city.

Many times he crossed the lake of Galilee; but this time, more in sadness than in anger, he left a people behind him who had prayed him to depart.

He had made Capernaum his own city by the privileges wherewith he had exalted it. What a name! "His own city." It was its highest honor that he came sailing into its port, even he who was Lord High Admiral of all seas.

Yet the favored city refused him, and knew not its day. May none of us be thus favored, and prove thus unworthy!

Matthew 9:2. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy ; Son, be of good cheer thy sins be forgiven thee.

Here our King displays his power over weakness. The man is sad and paralyzed; the weight of sin is on his conscience, and his body is in bonds.

Yet he has good friends, who band themselves together, and four of them carry him up to the roof of the house wherein our Lord is preaching, and let him down, in his bed, by ropes. They have faith in Jesus, and so has he; and the Lord answers to their faith with a cheering word, in which he called him "child." How sweet a word for a young man, and for one so feeble! His mental distress was the hardest to suffer, and our Lord removed it with a word. Perhaps the youth's sin had some connection with his palsy, and hence his double distress. None but Jesus could pardon sin; but with a royal word he pronounced effectual absolution. This he gave first, because most longed for by the paralytic, because the greatest boon, because the evil it removed lies at the root of every other, and because he thus unveiled his majesty, and had an opportunity to instruct opposers. How the youth's face brightened as he felt the comfort of that effectual forgiveness! He could not as yet walk, but he felt more happy than tongue could tell. "thy sins be forgiven thee" is a note which never fails to bring "good cheer" to the saddest heart.

Matthew 9:3. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

They were afraid to speak out, but "said within themselves." Each one of these law-writers felt a bitter feeling towards the Lord Jesus, and by their looks they conspired in the charge against him. They did not call him "man"; the word is in italics in our version. They did not know what to call him even in their hearts: they meant — "this" — this upstart, this nobody, this strange being, who is so great that we fear him, so good that we hate him. They were blaspheming him by their agnosticism, and yet these blasphemers charged the Lord with blasphemy. Yet, supposing our Lord to be only a man, they were right. Pardon of sin is the sole prerogative of God: who dares to usurp it?

I know that none but God can forgive; yet Jesus has forgiven me, and in so doing he did not blaspheme, for he is most truly God.

Matthew 9:4. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

He is the great thought-reader. Just now we met with the expression, "seeing their faith", and now we read, "knowing their thoughts." He puts the questioners to the question. His whys and wherefores go to the root of the matter. We are responsible for secret thoughts, and the Lord will one day call us to account concerning them. Accusations against Jesus are always unreasonable, and when fairly faced are put to silence. It would be well if many of our Lord's enemies today could be brought to ponder the question, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts" What is the cause of it?

What is the good of it? Why not cease from it?

Matthew 9:5. For whether is easier, to say. Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say Arise, and walk?

He answers their evil thoughts by a question which was to them unanswerable. Surely the two things are equally beyond human power to work. But to say "Thy sins be forgiven thee", is the easier to all appearance, because no apparent result is expected to follow by which the reality of the speech can be tested. Thousands have pretended to absolve a man from sin, who would not have dared to command a disease to disappear. The difference in merely saying is all in favor of the first speech.

If we compare the two miracles, it would be long before one could arrive at an answer as to which is the easier; for they are both impossible with men. In some respects the pardon of sin is the greater work of the two, for its accomplishment requires the whole apparatus of incarnation and atonement. Our Lord wrought both miracles, and thus confirmed his claim of power by a visible sign which none could question.

He that can pardon my soul can heal my body; for that would seem to be the easier of the two deeds of mercy. I may bring both forms of malady to Jesus, and he will deal with them. Lord, heal my spirit and cure my flesh!

Yea, thou wilt do this work most effectually by raising my body incorruptible as thine own.

Matthew 9:6. But that ye may know that the Sin of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

The second part of the miracle was for the silencing of those caviling scribes: "That ye may know." Did they ever come to this knowledge? The case was made clear for them, but they would not see it. Jesus, "the Son of man", was yet "on earth"; but in his lowly condition he had authority and power to forgive sins against God, for he was God. He would prove that he had "power on earth" by healing the paralytic. By exerting what they thought the greater power, he would prove his possession of the less. He bade the man "Arise", or bestir himself. He further says, "take up thy bed", or roll up your mat, and lift it to your shoulders, and then "walk." Thus would the obedient patient, by the free use of his limbs, prove himself to be wholly recovered. This was a great word to speak; but he, who had already received pardon from our Lord's lips, felt no difficulty in believing it, and he found his faith justified. If sin be forgiven, nothing is impossible. Surely it follows that if Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins, he can abundantly pardon now that we see him as the Son of God, enthroned in Heaven.

Matthew 9:7. And he arose, and departed to his house.

His limbs had received strength, and he did what Jesus bade him do, at once. Faith grasped the Savior's command, and obeyed it. There was no delay, no deviation from orders, no failure in the performance. It must have seemed hard to leave one to whom he owed so much, and go at once to the retirement of his house; but he did as he was bidden, and therein he is an example to us all. He did not go to the temple with the sacramentarian, nor to the theater with the man of the world: he went to his home. His palsy had made his house sad, and now his healing would cheer his family.

A man's restoration by grace is best seen in his own house. Lord, let it be seen in mine. Whether I carry my bed, or my bed carries me, may I do all to thy glory!

Matthew 9:8. But when the multitude saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

It was openly seen by all "the multitudes." Crowds heard of the marvel; it was town talk. It was evidently no delusion: the hopelessly palsied had been assuredly healed; for he had carried off his mattress, and was gone home. The common people did not cavil; but they wondered, and then they trembled, and were overawed, and driven to the adoration of God. So far so good; but it did not go far enough, nor last long enough. Men may see, marvel, and even in words glorify God, and yet may not accept his Son as their Lord. The multitudes had common-sense enough to give the glory of such a work to God, and to be struck with surprise that he should "give such power unto men, ." Evidently they viewed Jesus as a man on whom God had bestowed special gifts;

a prophet who had received miraculous power and used it on the behalf of men. They went as far as they knew: we wish we could say the same of many who, in this day, refuse to give our Lord the divine honors which he claims and abundantly deserves. If “the Son of man” had all this power, how can we limit him as “the Son of God”? Let us not leave the narrative till we have glorified God for all the many ways in which he gives power to those who have no strength, raises believers out of the paralysis of sin, and makes them blessings to others.

MATTHEW 9:9-13 THE GRACE OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 9:9. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, Sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Thus our evangelist speaks of himself as “a man, named Matthew.” He says that the Lord “saw ” him. What a seeing is meant here! Reader, may the Lord see you, whatever your name may be! Was Matthew at all like the man sick of the palsy? Does he mention his conversion here to suggest a parallel? His old name had been Levi: was Matthew his new name, or was it that which he had taken when he had degraded himself into a publican?

At any rate, it is a beautiful name, meaning “given”: he was a gift of Jehovah. To us he has been a true Theodore, or God’s gift, by being the penman of this gospel. He was an official of a kingdom, and therefore all the more fit to write this “gospel of the kingdom.” He was at this time busy taking, but he was called to a work which is essentially giving. He was sitting in one place “at the receipt of custom ”; but he was now to go about with his Lord doing good. Two words sufficed for his conversion and obedience: “Follow me.” They are very full and pregnant words. Like the palsied man, he did precisely what he was told to do: “He arose, and followed him.” Matthew describes his own conduct from personal knowledge, but he does not use a superfluous word. He acted with great decision and promptness. No doubt he saw his accounts settled; or, it may be, he had just sent them in, and he could leave at once without causing confusion in the custom-house. At any rate, he did there and then follow Jesus as a sheep follows its shepherd.

Lord, let my obedience towards thee be as the echo to the voice.

Matthew 9: 10-12. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciple. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples , Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

In Matthew’s house the Savior “sat at meat.” The new convert most naturally called in his old friends, that they might have the advantage of our Lord’s teaching: they would come to a supper more readily than to a sermon, and so he gave them a feast, and thus attracted them to the place where Jesus was. We may use all lawful means to bring others under the sound of the Word. A lot of the riff-raff came. “Sinner ” by occupation, as well as sinners by character, ventured in to the publican’s house, and dared to sit “with him and his disciples ” as if they had been members of his society. Probably they had been Matthew’s boon companions, and now he wished them to become his brothers in Christ.

Our Lord willingly accepted Matthew’s hospitality; for he desired to do good to those who most needed to be uplifted. He allowed persons of ill-fame to “sit down with him and his disciples.” Here was a fine opportunity for the sneering Pharisees. They insinuated that the Lord Jesus could be but a sorry person, since he drew such a rabble around him, and even allowed them to be his table-companions. They were very careful of their company when any saw them; for they thought that their superior holiness would be debased by allowing sinners to sit with them; and now they have a handy stone to throw at Jesus while he eats with publicans and sinners.

The Pharisees were cowardly enough to speak their cavil to his disciples rather than to the Master; but the Leader put himself in the front, and soon baffled the adversaries. His reasoning was overwhelming, and his justification ample. Where should a physician be but among the sick? Who should come to a doctor’s house but those who are diseased? Thus our Lord was more than justified in being the center to which the morally sick should gather for their spiritual healing.

Lord, grant that if ever I am found in the company of sinners, it may be with the design of healing them, and may I never become

myself infected with their disease!

Matthew 9:13. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Our Lord, having gloriously defended himself from the insinuations of the proud Pharisees, now carries the war into the enemies' territory. He says to them, "Go ye and learn "; and this alone would be distasteful to men who thought they knew everything already. They were to learn the meaning of a Scripture in Hosea 6:6; and this would teach them that to have mercy upon sinners is a work more pleasing to God than the presenting of expensive sacrifices, or the performing of religious exercises. They would learn that he had rather do mercy himself, and have them do mercy to others, than accept of their most punctilious observances.

The Lord Jesus also gave them a clear word as to his object in coming among men. He came not to be served by the good, but to save the evil. He had come to call to repentance those who needed repentance, and not those just ones who required no amendment, if such there were. This was a very just satire upon the Pharisees' self opinionated notions; but, at the same time, it was, and is, and for ever will be, a grand consolation for those who own their guilt. Our Savior King has come to save real sinners.

He deals not with our merits, but with our demerits. There would be no need to save us if we were not lost: the Son of God does no unnecessary work; but to those who need repentance he has come to bring it.

Lord, I am one who needs thy call; for surely if anyone hath need to repent, I am that one. Call me with thine effectual call. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned."

MATTHEW 9:14-17 THE JOY OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 9:14. Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

The disciples of John, like their leader, were ascetics; and therefore, like the Pharisees, abounded in fasts. They were scandalized because the disciples of Jesus were seen at feasts, and were not known to fast. They did not murmur in secret like the scribes, but had the matter out face to face.

They came to him. Like honest friends, who felt hurt, they came to head-quarters, and asked the Lord himself. This open expression prevented after-dissension, and it was therefore wise. When good men differ, it is well to refer the matter to the Lord himself. To agree to differ may be all very well, but to have the difference removed by explanation is better far.

Matthew 9:15. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

Here our Lord answered the second part of their enquiry; the first part they must answer on their own account. They knew, or ought to have known, why they and the Pharisees fasted. Why his disciples did not fast he proceeds to explain. He is "the Bridegroom " who came to woo and win his bride; those who followed him were the guests, the Bridegroom's best men and attendants; it was for them to rejoice while the Bridegroom headed their company; for sorrow is not suitable for wedding-feasts. Our Lord is that Bridegroom of whom Solomon sang in the Song of songs, and we who enjoy his fellowship are one with him in his joy. Why should we fast while he is near? Can we allow little things to kill our great joy? Can we, in consistency with reason, and in harmony with respect for our Lord, mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with us?

But Jesus was to go. He says himself, "The Bridegroom shall be taken from them. " Here first he speaks about his death. Did his disciples note the warning word? When their Beloved was gone, they would have fasted enough. How true was this! Sorrows crowded in upon them when he was gone. It is the same with us. Our Lord is our joy: his presence makes our banquet; his absence is our fast, black and bitter. All Ritualistic fasting is the husk: the reality of fasting is known only to the child of the bridechamber when his Lord is no more with him. This is fasting indeed, as some of us know full well.

There is no wedding without a Bridegroom, no delight without Jesus. In his presence is fullness of joy; in his absence is depth of misery. Let but the heart rest in his love and it desireth nothing more. Take away a sense of his love from the soul, and it is dark, empty, and nigh unto death.

Matthew 9:16. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is yet in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Jesus came not to repair Israel's worn vesture, but to bring new robes.

Even if a mere mending had been aimed at, it could not have been effected through his disciples copying old ways. New cloth which has been unshrunk is not fit to be used as a patch to mend an old, garment, fully shrunk by many washings. His disciples must act consistently, and not join untimely fasting to their enjoyment of his company. They were not the kind of persons to repair the old religion of Judaism, which had become worn out. They were new men, unshrunk by the spirit of tradition; and to try to enclose them within the vesture of legal Ritualistic religion would not tend to unity, but the reverse. Genuine believers had better not attempt fellowship with ceremonialists; they will soon find themselves out of place.

Jesus did not come to patch up our old outward religiousnesses, but to make a new robe of righteousness for us. All attempts to add the gospel to legalism will only make the rent worse. It may be added that rash attempts to unite the various churches by comprehending all their errors within the pale of supposed truth, will only increase the present lamentable divisions, and postpone real unity to a distant day.

Matthew 9:17. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: butt they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

His teaching and spirit could not be associated with the Pharisaic order of things. Judaism in its degenerate condition was an old skin bottle which had seen its day, and our Lord would not our the new wine of the kingdom of heaven into it. - John's disciples were trying to emulate the Pharisees, and make common cause with them to save the old church. Jesus would have nothing to do with this project. he would have a new church for his new doctrine and for his new spirit. There was to be no amalgamation.

Christianity was not to be an outgrowth of Rabbinism. There was to be a severance between Jesus, and the scribes and their school of thought; for he who had come was resolved to make all things new. There is rare teaching here, and guidance for the present crisis. Compromises are often proposed, and we have good people, like John's disciples, who would have us conform to what they think good in things established; but we had better act consistently, and begin de novo. The old cloth will always be tearing, and tearing all the worse because of our new pieces; therefore let us leave the old garment to those who prefer antiquity to truth.

The mixing of wedding feasts and funeral fasts, the patching of old cloth with pieces unfurled and unshrunk, and the putting of new wine into old bottles, are all pictures of those mixtures and compromises, which cannot, in the nature of things, serve any good and lasting purpose. If we follow the rejoicing Bridegroom, let us not try to keep in with the fasting Pharisees, or the sacramentarian legalists of the day. Let the Scientific Doubters also go; for faith is not of their mind: she knows, and can never be Agnostic. Let us have done with the doubts which make us fast, and let us hold high festival while the Bridegroom is still with us by his Spirit. We would follow nought beside Jesus, Jesus crucified

MATTHEW 9:18-26 THE KING'S DOMINION OVER DISEASE AND DEATH

Matthew 9:18, 19. While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

Our Lord had better work to do than to be talking about meats and drinks, feasting and fastings: he is soon clear of that debate. The battle of life and death was raging, and he was needed in the fray.

Sorrow comes even to the families of the excellent of the earth. A ruler of the synagogue and a believer in Jesus has such sickness befallen his daughter that she is at death's door, and is probably by this time actually dead. But the father has a grand faith. Even if she be dead, Jesus can restore her with a touch. Oh, that he would but come! He worships the Lord, and pleads with him: "Come and lay thy hand upon her, and, she shall live." Have we such faith as this? After centuries of manifestation, is Jesus as well trusted as in the days of his flesh? Have we not those among us who have not yet learned the happy blend which we see in the ruler's conduct? He came to Jesus, he worshipped him, he prayed to him, he trusted in him.

Our King, in whom is vested the power of life and death, yields at once to the petition of faith, and sets out for the ruler's house. The Lord follows believers, for believers follow their Lord: such is the order of verse 19.

Jesus does as we pray, and we follow as he leads. The Preacher steps down from his pulpit, and becomes a visiting Surgeon, taking his rounds. From discussing Church questions our great Rabbi very readily turns aside to go and see a sick, nay, a dead girl. He is more at home in doing good than in anything else.

Matthew 9:20, 21. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

This is an incident on the road, a wonder by the way. While the Lord is moving towards the chamber of the ruler's dying daughter he works a miracle without a word. He was intent on his design to raise a girl; but without designing it he cures an older woman. The very spillings and overflowings of Christ's power are precious.

Note the word "behold." Here we have a notable circumstance. This afflicted woman had suffered from a weakening hemorrhage for "twelve years", and had found no cure; but now she beheld the great Miracleworker, and with a timid courage she pushed into the crowd, and touched the hem of his garment. Great fear kept her from facing him: great faith led her to believe that a touch of his robe behind him would cure her.

She was ignorant enough to think that healing went from him unconsciously; but yet her faith lived despite her ignorance, and triumphed despite her bashfulness. It was her own idea to make a dash for it, and steal a cure: "She said within herself." It was her wisdom that at once she carried out her resolve. Poor soul! it was her only chance, and she would not lose it. It happened that our Lord's dress was drawn backward by the throng, and she was able with her finger to reach its hem. She believed that this would be enough, and so it proved Oh, that we were as eager to be saved as she was to be healed! Oh; that we had such confidence in Jesus as to be sure that if we come into contact with him, even by the least promise, and the smallest faith, he can and will save us!

My soul, when thou art in urgent need, be brave to come nigh unto thy Lord; for if a touch of his garment will heal, what virtue must lie in his own self!

Matthew 9:22. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

We have not all the story here. It will be well to read it in Mark 5. and Luke 8. Jesus knew all that was going on behind him. If his back be towards us now, it need not always be; for he "turned him about." Even when fear would hide from Jesus, he spies out the trembler. His eye found her speedily, for he knew where to look. "He saw her." His voice cheered her with joyful tones of acceptance. He did not chide the blundering of her ignorance, but he commended the bravery of her faith, and consoled her trembling heart. A piece of fringe and a finger sufficed to form a contact between a believing sufferer and an Almighty Savior. Along that line faith sent its message, and love returned the answer. She "was made whole", and she knew it; but she feared when she was found out lest she should lose the blessing and earn a curse. This fear soon vanished: Jesus called her "daughter." He fathered her because he had created faith in her. He gave her "good comfort" because she had good faith. It was his garment which she touched, but it was her faith which had touched it; therefore our Lord said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole"; and thus he put the crown upon the head of her faith, because her faith had already set the crown on his head. The moment we touch Jesus we are made whole; yea, "from that hour." May we touch him now, and may this hour be as memorable to us as that hour was to her!

Matthew 9:23, 24. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, he said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

The funeral wailing had already begun: "the minstrels " had commenced their hideous discords. Mistrustful friends are eager to bury us before the due time; and we are ourselves too apt to fall into the same error about others. Unbelief calls in the undertakers and the hired mourners to bury those who will yet live for years. We give over to hopelessness those whom Jesus will save; or we begin "making a noise " where a gracious, silent work would be far better.

Jesus will have the death-music quieted; for it is premature, and even false in its significance. He says to the minstrels, "Give place. " Many things have to give place when Jesus comes on the scene; and he takes care that they shall give place; for he puts them out of the room. To him the maid is asleep rather than dead; for he is about to call her back to life. He sees the future as well as the present; and to him in that light "the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. " The Lord Jesus wants not pipers, flute players, and wailers; his own still voice is more fit for work in the death chamber with a young girl. Jesus is going to do wonders, and the hired performances of those who mimic woe are not in tune therewith.

When Jesus tells the hired performers that there will be no need to proceed with the funeral, for the girl will live, they answer with scoffs, for they are sure that she is dead. It is a shameful thing to laugh at Christ. Yet "he endured such contradiction of sinners against himself", and was not angry.

We need not be dismayed when we are ridiculed; for "they laughed HIM to scorn. " Nor may we stop our working because of derision; for Jesus went on with his resurrection work despite the mockers.

Matthew 9:25. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

It was not meet that a ribald throng should behold the majestic mystery of resurrection; they must be "put forth. " Moreover, the hideous noise of the funeral wailers was not a fit accompaniment of the Savior's word of power. The people were turned out, and then the Lord "went in " to work his miracle. He loves to work in quiet. There are directions in modern church life in which noise and popular excitement will have to come to an end before much is done by the Lord.

When we read, "He took her by the hand ", it reminds us of his touching Peter's wife's mother. He shows a sacred familiarity with those whom he saves. He is not said in this gospel to have spoken, and thus the contrast between empty noise and his mighty silence, is brought out clearly. Life was gone from the maiden; but the result was the same as in the case of Peter's relative who was still alive: she arose. How much had taken place before a dead girl could rise! This is the first case of resurrection by our Lord: it was that of one who had but just died, and it is typical of the giving of spiritual life to persons who have not yet come to the stage of corruption which necessitates carrying them out, like the widow's son; or of actual decay, which has led to burial, as in the case of Lazarus. In each case the miracle was the same; but the surroundings greatly differed, so that the instruction varied.

Lord, take our dear young children by the hand, and raise them up to everlasting life while they are children!

Matthew 9:26. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

The news of the raising of the dead was sure to spread, especially as it was the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. Where new life is bestowed, there will be no fear of its being unobserved. Jesus will have fame if we have life, and we should take care that it is so.

MATTHEW 9:27-31 THE KING'S TOUCH HEALING THE BLIND

Matthew 9:27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.

No sooner does Jesus move than fresh candidates for his bounty appear: the blind seek sight from him. Two sightless men had become companions in affliction; they may have been father and son. They were in downright earnest, for they "followed him, crying, and saying, Have mercy on us " Persevering, vehement, yet intelligent was their appeal. They were of one mind in reference to Jesus, and therefore they went one way, and use one prayer, to one and the same person. Our Lord is here called by his royal name: "Thou Son of David. " Even the blind could see that he was a king's son. As Son of David, he is entreated to show mercy, and act according to his royal nature. It is mercy which gives us our faculties, and mercy alone can restore them.

This prayer suits us when we perceive our own darkness of mind. When we cannot see our way into truth, let us appeal to the Lord for gracious instruction; ever remembering that we have no claim except that which originates in his mercy.

Matthew 9:28. 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.

They were most eager for the boon. They gave him no leisure: they pressed into the house where he had nought privacy and rest: they came to him, even to Jesus himself. The Lord would have them express their faith, and so he makes inquiry of them as to what they believe about himself. Jesus makes no inquiry about their eyes, but only about their faith: this is ever the vital point. They could not see, but they could believe; and they did so.

They had a specific faith as to the matter about which they prayed; for our Lord put it plainly, "Believe ye that I am able to do THIS?" They had also a clear view of the character of him to whom they applied; for they had already styled him "Son of David ", and now they called him "Lord. "

Matthew 9:29. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

Again he arouses their faith; and this time he throws the whole responsibility upon their confidence in him. "according to your faith be it unto you. " He touched them with his hand; but they must also touch him with their faith. The word of power in the last sentence is one upon which he acts so continually, that we may call it, as to many blessings, a rule of the kingdom. We have the measuring of our own mercies; our faith obtains less or more according to its own capacity to receive. Had these men been mere pretenders to faith they would have remained blind. If we will not in very truth trust our Lord, we shall die in our sins.

Matthew 9:30. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

They both saw: the double miracle was wrought at the same moment.

Comrades in the dark, they are now companions in the light. Singular that for two souls there should thus be one destiny! It was a singular double fact, and deserved to be made widely known; but our Lord had wise reasons for requiring silence. He "straitly charged them. " He left them no option: he demanded complete silence. He that opened their eyes closed their mouths. Jesus did not desire fame; he wanted less crowding; he wished to avoid excitement; and therefore he was express and peremptory in his order: "See that no man know it. "

Matthew 9:31. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

They most industriously published what they were bidden to conceal, till "all that country " rang with the news. In this they erred greatly, and probably caused the Savior so much inconvenience by the pressure of the crowd, that he had to remove from the town. We may not hope that we are doing right if we disobey our Lord. However natural disobedience may appear to be, it is disobedience, and must not be excused. Even if the results turned out to be advantageous, it would not make it right to break the command of our Lord. Silence is more than golden when our King commands it. He doth not seek applause, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets that he may be known to be doing a great work. His followers do well to copy his example.

We do not wonder that our Lord's name became famous when there were such persons to advertise it. How earnestly and eloquently would the two formerly blind men tell the story of how he opened their eyes! We are not forbidden, but exhorted to make

known the wonders of his grace. Let us not fail in this natural, this necessary, this useful duty. More and more let us “spread abroad his fame. ”

MATTHEW 9:32-35 THE KING AND THOSE POSSESSED WITH DEVILS

Matthew 9:32. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

As a pair of patients leave the surgery, another poor creature comes in.

Note the “behold. ” The case is striking. He comes not freely, or of his own accord: “they brought ” him: thus should we bring men to Jesus. He does not cry for help, for he is “a dumb man. ” Let us open our mouths for the dumb. He is not himself, but he is “possessed with a devil. ” Poor creature! will anything be done for him?

Matthew 9:33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

Our Lord does not deal with the symptoms, but with the source of the disorder, even with the evil spirit. “The devil was cast out ”; and it is mentioned as if that were a matter of course when Jesus came on the scene. The devil had silenced the man, and so, when the evil one was gone, “the dumb spake. ” How we should like to know what he said! Whatever he said it matters not; the wonder was that he could say anything. The people confessed that this was a wonder quite unprecedented; and in this they only said the truth: “It was never so seen in Israel. ” Jesus is great at surprises: he has novelties of gracious power. The people were quick to express their admiration; yet we see very little trace of their believing in our Lord’s mission. It is a small thing to marvel, but a great thing to believe.

O Lord, give the people around us to see such revivals and conversions, as they have never known before!

Matthew 9:34. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

Of course, they had some bitter sentence ready. Nothing was too bad for them to say of Jesus. They were hard pressed when they took to this statement, which our Lord in another place so easily answered. They hinted that such power over demons must have come to him through an unholy compact with “the prince of the devils. ” Surely this was going very near to the unpardonable sin.

Matthew 9:35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

This was his answer to the blasphemous slanders of the Pharisees. A glorious reply it was. Let us answer calumny by greater zeal in doing good.

Small places were not despised by our Lord: he went about the villages as well as the cities. Village piety is of the utmost importance, and has a close relation to city life. Jesus turned old institutions to good account: the “synagogues ” became his Seminaries. Three-fold was his ministry: expounding the old, proclaiming the new, healing the diseased.

Observe the repetition of the word “every ” as showing the breadth of his healing power. All this stood in relation to his royalty; for it was “the gospel of the kingdom ” which he proclaimed. Our Lord was “the Great Itinerant”: Jesus went about preaching, and healing. His was a Medical Mission as well as an evangelistic tour. Happy people who have Jesus among them! Oh, that we might now see more of his working among our own people!

MATTHEW 9:36-38 THE KING PITIYING THE MULTITUDES

Matthew 9:36. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

A great crowd is a demand upon compassion, for it suggests so much sin and need. In this case, the great want was instruction: "they fainted " for I want of comfort; they "were scattered abroad " for lack of guidance. They were eager to learn, but they had no fit teachers. "Sheep having no shepherd " are in an ill plight. Unfed, unfolded, unguarded, what will become of them? Our Lord was stirred with a feeling which agitated his inmost soul. "He was moved with compassion. " What he saw affected not his eye only, but his heart. He was overcome by sympathy. His whole frame was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement. He is even now affected towards our people in the same manner. He is moved with compassion if we are not.

Matthew 9:37, 38. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

His heavy heart sought solace among "his disciples ", and he spake to them. He mourned the scantiness of workers. Pretenders were many, but real "laborers " in the harvest were few. The sheaves were spoiling. The crowds were ready to be taught, even as ripe wheat is ready for the sickle; but there were few to instruct them, and where could more teaching men be found?

God only can thrust out, or "send forth laborers " Man-made ministers are useless. Still are the fields encumbered with gentlemen who cannot use the sickle. Still the real ingatherers are few and far between. Where are the instructive, soulwinning ministries? Where are those who travail in birth for their hearers' salvation? Let us plead with the Lord of the harvest to care for his own harvest, and send out his own men. May many a true heart be moved by the question, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? "to answer," Here am I! Send me."