



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Gospel of Matthew

“The Second Joshua Working Miracles in Jericho Again”

Matthew 20:29-34

TRANSCRIPT

The exposition of the word of God is the exposition of Matthew chapter 20 verse 29 through verse 34, but since what I am going to say is also built upon the parallel account in Mark chapter 10, I want to read both of these passages for our Scripture reading. So let's turn first to Matthew chapter 20, and I want to read verses 29 through 34, and then we'll turn to the Markan passage in chapter 10 of that Gospel. Remember the context. The Lord Jesus is now on his way to the city of Jerusalem where he will offer himself as a sacrifice for sinners. And Matthew writes in verse 29 of chapter 20:

“And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David’. And the multitude rebuked them, that they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, ‘Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.’ And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, ‘What will ye that I shall do unto you?’ They say unto him, ‘Lord, that our eyes may be opened.’ So Jesus had

“The Second Joshua Working Miracles Again in Jericho” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.”

Let’s turn now to Mark chapter 10 and verse 46. Mark chapter 10 and verse 46, and read the account in the Gospel of Mark.

“And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the way side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, ‘Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me’. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, ‘Thou son of David, have mercy on me.’ And Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, ‘Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.’ And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?’ The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I may receive my sight. Jesus said unto him, ‘Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.’ And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus on the way.”

Luke in his account comments that he followed the Lord Jesus glorifying God, and that the people gave praise to God as a result of what had happened. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

You may have overlooked the fact in your study of the New Testament that the name of our Lord Jesus Jesus is the same as the name for Joshua in the Old Testament. The word *Iesous* in the Greek of the New Testament is the equivalent of *Y’hoshua* or

Joshua, in the Old Testament. So what we have in this account that we are looking at is an appearance of the second Joshua before Jericho, and so the title this morning for the message is “The Second Joshua Working Miracles at Jericho Again.”

The biblical critics have had a happy time studying this passage of Scripture which has to do with the healing of the blind men, as our Lord was at Jericho on his last visit to the city of Jerusalem while in the flesh. And it contains problems that lend some credence to their view that the Bible is after all only an ordinary book. Confidently, they intone in details and many important points, the gospels do not agree.

Then they go on to say, somewhat condescendingly, that the differences in these accounts do not really make a whole lot of difference, except insofar as they give instruction to those who believe that the Bible is true in all of its statements. So they tell us that these differences in the accounts don’t mean anything, but they at least should instruct those simple-minded people – they mean you and me – who think that the words of holy Scripture are inerrant. What are the difficulties which give the detractors of the Bible such relish in these accounts of the healing of the blind men?

There are two particularly. In the first place, Matthew speaks of two men who are healed, while Mark and Luke speak only of one. Now of course you should notice immediately if you have any facility for thinking logically, that when Matthew says that there are two, and Mark and Luke speak only of one, Mark and Luke do not say that there was only one blind man. Now that is very important. All that Luke and Mark say is that the Lord healed a blind man. Mark gives his name as Bartimaeus. They do not say he healed only one man. So there is really no contradiction between the accounts in that respect.

But there is something else that is of probably of greater difficulty. Mark and Matthew place the healing after the Lord Jesus leaves Jericho, while Luke appears to place the healing before the Lord Jesus enters Jericho.

Now that might be a serious problem for those who believe that the Bible is inerrant in the statements that it makes. We must of course remember that so far as the Scriptures are concerned, we do not have all of the details surrounding the incidents of the Bible, and so we have to think in our own minds of situations in which the words of Scripture may find their significance and relevance. But there have been a number of suggestions by individuals in attempts to harmonize this fact that Mark and Matthew place the healing after Jericho whereas Luke suggests that the healing occurred before the Lord entered Jericho.

One Bible teacher, who has been a very prominent Bible teacher, has taught that really we have two different healings. Now of course we have already had the healing of two blind men in the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 9 and since it was the Messianic office of the Lord Jesus to heal blind men, it’s certainly true that he did heal many blind men through the three years or so of his ministry. And so it has been suggested that what we have in Luke is one account whereas what we have in Mark and Matthew is another account, and if that is so that would of course solve all of our difficulties.

Still others have said, for example Professor A. T. Robertson, the well known New Testament professor, for many years in the last generation or so at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, that there were really two Jerichos. That is, an old or ancient city and a new modern Jericho, which was new and modern in our Lord’s day. We know that this is generally true, and it is Professor Robertson’s contention that in one of the accounts, the author looks at it from the standpoint of the old city of Jericho and thus the healing was as he came out of the city of Jericho, and as he was to enter the new Jericho, and the other account is written from that standpoint. So if there were two Jerichos it would be very easy to harmonize these accounts. The healing took place between the leaving of one and the entering of another.

Another ancient commentator, the Pietist commentator Albrecht Bengel, whose writings have been read by countless thousands of students of the Scripture, not only in

the original Latin in the which he wrote them, but in other of in other translations of them. Bengel has made the suggestion that what happened really was that the blind men met the Lord Jesus as he was entering Jericho, and since Jericho was a relatively small city, they followed the great crowd seeking to get to him as he made his way through Jericho, and then finally came into touch with him as they were leaving the city and thus both of the accounts could be true: one written from the standpoint of the entrance and the other written from the standpoint of the exit where the healing really took place.

There are some modern interpretations, too. One of the modern interpreters has suggested that really what happened was something like this: the two blind men were seated right near the outskirts of the city, but when they heard the crowd which preceded the Lord Jesus, and they heard word that Jesus was coming, they began to shout, and so they began to shout as the Lord Jesus entered the city, and Luke writes his account from that standpoint. But finally as he came to leave the city, they came into contact with him and were healed as he left the city.

Still another has suggested this explanation. He has said that it’s shortly after this that the Lord Jesus sees Zacchaeus in the in the tree, and he calls down Zacchaeus, and remember, says that he was going to lodge with him that night. Now since Zacchaeus lived in Jericho, and since he wanted to see the Lord Jesus, he had raced outside the city so he could catch a good view of him and when the Lord Jesus saw him with the multitude looking at the little man up in the tree, he called out to Zacchaeus as he came out of the city and said Zacchaeus come down I must lodge with you tonight. And the incident involving Zacchaeus took place ,and then he went back into the city and spent the night with Zacchaeus. And so one of the accounts is written from the standpoint of the leaving of the city whereas the other is written from the standpoint of our Lord entering back into the city, and as he entered, he met the blind men and healed them.

So there are a number of suggestions that have been offered. The Gospels do not really give us anything necessarily contradictory. We just don’t know the details. One of

the interesting things that we shall be engaged in at least for a little while when we get to heaven is the harmonization of many things with which we do not have enough information to harmonize ourselves. So I don’t think that there is any serious problem in this at all. It’s interesting. I don’t know how it happened, and I’m looking forward to finding out how when I get there. But I imagine that when we get there these will be rather insignificant things. And you’ll probably say to me, Dr. Johnson, why did you waiste eight or nine minutes that morning talking about that? [Laughter]

There is a two-fold significance in this event that is more important, and I think the first thing is what we can call, for the sake of a better word, a dispensational significance. Remember the Lord Jesus is coming to Jerusalem as the King of Israel. When he enters—shortly in the next message we shall consider his untriumphal entry—he will come and the people shall shout out, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.” And I think since it was one of the duties of the Messianic king to heal the eyes of the blind, specifically, that it’s very appropriate that as he makes his plans for entering the city of Jerusalem, he should heal again some blind men making or bringing to the forefront again the fact that he is the Messianic king who performs the miracles that he is supposed to perform according to Old Testament prophesy. That’s one of the important things.

But there is another thing that is even more important, and that is the reference that this particular incident has to the spiritual life of men and women. It is again a beautiful illustration of the Lord’s power to illuminate the spiritually blind. The word of God tells us the Apostle Paul, particularly, that the natural man – that is the man who does not have any relationship to the Lord Jesus that is vital and life-giving – the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.

In other words, the Apostle Paul says that the natural man cannot understand spiritual truth. There must be a previous working of the Holy Spirit by which their minds

are illuminated to understand divine truth. Paul puts it in other ways. He says that we are dead in trespasses and sin. It’s just possible that there are some in this audience this morning, in fact it’s probable, that there are some in this audience who do not have a vital saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and you rather wonder why it is that you are here this morning. Perhaps some friend has brought you. Or perhaps out of what you thought was mere curiosity, and you are wondering why it is that people come to hear an exposition of an ancient book written hundreds and hundreds of years ago. You read it and you do not get anything out of it. You find it, in the words of the Apostle Paul, foolishness. You are actually fulfilling the words of Scripture in the fact that you do not understand it and rather think that it is stupid—that’s the meaning of Paul’s term really. Stupid.

Now the Bible tells us that those who do not have eternal life are spiritually blind. Over and over again, the apostle mentions that. He says that we are blind in our hearts. We are alienated from God and do not have the life of God within us. And this incident is designed to illustrate the fact that it is the Lord Jesus who works in the hearts of blind men. Men who are spiritually blind.

I read a story not long ago about two farmers who rode on a train for the first time. This happened many years ago. They had never ridden on a train, and so they got on a train – and I don’t know whether there’s anybody in this audience old enough to remember what it was like to ride on a train – but in the old days when you got on a train and sat down in the car it was not long before the vendors came through with their goods on their little trays that they brought through and they sold fruit and sandwiches and cigarettes and drinks and things like that.

Well they were attracted to the fruit, and the two farmers bought some bananas. And one of them peeled his banana and was just ready to take a bite of it, and took a bite as the train plunged into a tunnel, and he turned to his friend and he said, “Have you

eaten any of your banana yet?” And he said, no, I haven’t. He said, “Well don’t do it; it’ll make you blind as a bat.” [Laughter]

Now there are people who sit in an audience such as this who do not understand anything more about spiritual things than those two farmers understood about bananas and tunnels. You are here and that’s all, and you wonder why.

Now I know that’s true, because I attended church myself for about twenty-five years and did not understand what in the world was going on. I was blind as a bat spiritually. Now God the Holy Spirit must work in the hearts of men for spiritual illumination to come, and this incident this miracle in the life of our Lord is another illustration of his power. Let’s turn to it now, and first of all, let me say a word about the historical situation against the background of which the Lord Jesus ministers.

Now we are in the part of Matthew in which we are going to have a great deal of stress upon the ministry of the Lord in the last days. To tell you the truth, I am really excited. I don’t get excited very often. But I am really excited about studying these last chapters of the Gospel of Matthew again, because I think the most fruitful parts of biblical study are the passages in the gospels that have to do with the passion of the Lord Jesus. And we are fast approaching that part of the Gospel of Matthew in which the Lord Jesus in the last days of his life ministers there, preparatory to giving his life a ransom for many.

Now as he made his way down to Jerusalem on the last of his journeys to that city in the flesh, he was making his way with the apostles, and also with a company of friends. Mark tells us in the 32<sup>nd</sup> verse of the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, “And they were on the way going up to Jerusalem and Jesus went before them.” And you can picture the little crowd the apostles gathered close to the Lord Jesus and then their friends and relatives who were a little back, and the Lord Jesus suddenly began to lengthen his steps, as he made his way toward Jerusalem. Luke describes his countenance as an appearance as if he were going to Jerusalem. And so as he lengthened his step and marched out with

increasing speed before them the apostles noticed that that was not his customary action in their travels, and so the Scriptures say that they were amazed, they were astonished.

And then looking at the people who were following Mark continues and says, “As they followed they were afraid.” So there was something about the occasion in which our Lord had this different look upon his face moved out in front of the company, there was something about it that caused the rest of the group that were with them to come under the influence of this sense of the luminous, and awe stricken they observed the Lord Jesus as he made his way toward Jerusalem.

Bengel, that same German commentator, asks the question, what was he doing?, and then answers it by saying that he was dwelling in his passion. He was thinking about what now was immediately before him when he would finally go to that cross and cry out, “It is finished” after having said “My God my God why hast Thou forsaken me?” That is really a kind of theme verse of these final chapters of the gospel records.

So the Lord Jesus, having crossed the Jordan now comes to the little city of Jericho—and remember his name was Joshua. So a greater Joshua stands at Jericho with his sword drawn to storm the stronghold of the Prince of Darkness, and he will win the battle by dying upon a Roman gibbet. And this incident of the blind man is a kind of earnest of the victory the Lord Jesus will obtain when he shed his blood.

Well as he draws near to Jericho, a great multitude is following him. They are friends of his. No doubt many relatives of his too. They draw near to the city of Jericho and behold Matthew says in the 30<sup>th</sup> verse, two blind men sitting by the way side. It’s not surprising that our Lord’s miracles include the healing of blind men because that was the Messianic work: to open the eyes of the blind. Isaiah says that when the Messiah comes he will do that. He says that in chapter 29, about verse 17 or 18 of that chapter. He also says that in chapter 35 and verse 5. So this was a specific Messianic miracle.

So it’s not surprising then that in his miracles there should be the healing of many blind men. And furthermore, it’s not surprising that there should be two of them. It’s

pathetic when you think about it, of course, but it was natural, because two blind men would naturally be anxious for sympathy and encouragement and help, and it is true that equal sorrows cause men to creep close for warmth and companionship. We know that when we have other afflictions. Those that have similar afflictions do tend to come together because they can mutually help one another.

Blindness was very, very common, unfortunately, in the eastern cities in the time of our Lord. One of the reasons for this was that there were conditions of uncleanness that caused such diseases to abound. And in addition the bright glare of the sun in those parts of our world were such, and since they didn’t have protection from the sun, that they became afflicted in their eyes. A visitor in our modern day to Cairo, Egypt has said that it was his observation that out of one hundred people in Egypt, about fifty were affected with eye disease. Twenty were blind, ten had lost one eye, and twenty had other eye diseases. So we should not be surprised then that the Lord Jesus in his ministry should encompass the healing of many blind men.

The text says that when the Lord Jesus passed by, they heard that Jesus had passed by. And incidentally in the words that are the outpouring of their heart which we’ll refer to in just a moment, it’s evident that they had already heard of the Lord Jesus. They knew something about him. It’s even possible that they had heard accounts of the healing ministry of this Jesus of Nazareth, and incidentally since they had no doubt studied the Scriptures themselves and paid because of their affliction particular attention to those prophecies of the Old Testament that spoke of the healing of blind men, and longing for that themselves, that they were naturally attracted to the stories concerning the Lord Jesus.

You know, it is said in holy Scripture, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. So the word concerning the Lord Jesus had been disseminated, and they had heard it and on the basis of what they had heard the Holy Spirit had wrought in their hearts.

This incident, incidentally is the origin of Sankey – Sankey was the song leader for Dwydell Moody – of Sankey’s hymn, “What means this eager anxious throng which moves with busy haste along these wondrous gatherings day by day / what means this strange commotion pray in accents hushed the throng reply Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” Well, when the word came to the blind men that the Lord Jesus might be near, they began to cry out. Now Mark tells us they began to. We would gather that from Matthew, because in the account here in Matthew, they cry out, “Have mercy upon us,” and then when some seek to stop them they still cry out the more, “O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy upon us.”

So they began to cry out, and I want you to notice what they say when they cry out to him. They do not say, O man of Nazareth, have mercy upon us. They do not say, O Yankee or Northerner have mercy upon us. They have some very definite information concerning him. They cry out, have mercy on us O Lord thou son of David. So it is evident they have some faith in his person as the Lord. That is, they have some conception that he is a divine person and also they have a conception of him as the Messiah, because son of David is a Messianic term. So they know that he is the Son of God, and they know that he is the Messiah.

Now whether they understood all of the significance of it whether they would understand what that meant in the light of the Council of Calcedon later on, that’s another matter. But at least they had come to the conviction he was the Lord and come to the conviction that he was the Messianic king. And not only did they have faith in his person, but they had a great confidence in his power, because they said, have mercy upon us. They knew that it was within the power of the Lord Jesus to heal them, and so they cried out have mercy upon us.

Now you know these men are a picture in the kind of attitude that men ought to have when they come into conviction for sin and desire to have deliverance. They were earnest. They cried. They kept crying. Even the tenses of the verbs in the other

accounts stress the fact that this cry of theirs was a continual thing. They were earnest. We are earnest about everything but spiritual things.

First thing I said to one of my friends this morning when I came in was I shook his hand and said the Rangers didn’t do very well last night. I said you know you cannot win a baseball game if you have a hole in your bat. [Laughter] Now some of you evidently haven’t read the morning paper, and you do don’t know that the Rangers were nohit last night. They didn’t get a hit in the game. And my friend, who is a baseball fan said, that’s true, you cannot win a baseball game if you don’t get a hit.

Now we are very earnest about our sports. We are very earnest about our business. We are very earnest about our studies. We are very earnest about our calling in life about our friends our hobbies – about everything – but when it comes to spiritual things, our hearts are as the old commentators used to say, as cold as the arctic snows.

These men were earnest. Not only that they were persistent. When actually people said, shut up, they said we’re gonna not only keep it up but we’re going to shout loud enough in order to get over the heads of our hinderers, and so they cried out the text of Scripture says the more. So the more they were told to shut up the louder they cried. They were persistent. They knew what they wanted. And this is a very poignant fact when you think of blind men who could not see in the midst of a multitude. They must have been crying out all along where is he? Which way did he go? What street did he turn down? And all at the same time shouting out, O Lord, thou son of David have mercy upon us! Which way did he go? Lord have mercy upon us. Did he turn that way? Show me. Take me to him. You can see this was something that was very very important for them. They knew what they wanted and incidentally they were humble.

These cries that they were making were confessions of their unworthiness. O Lord, thou son of David have mercy upon me. They did not talk of their merits. They didn’t say, for example, O Lord have mercy upon us, we attend the synagogue regularly. We listen to the Pharisees. We study the Scriptures. We do good works. We don’t put a

sign our face “blind” when we really can see. They had no talk of merit whatsoever, because whenever we talk of merit before the Lord, the doors of heaven are shut. O Lord, thou son of David have mercy upon us. They really were beggar—literally, Mark tells us—and they were beggars spiritually seeking for help. And they plead as criminals, have mercy upon us.

Now this illustrates of course the fact that according to the teaching of the word of God, our wills are obstinate in rebellion against the Lord. You know, the Scriptures so plainly teach—I have to talk about this constantly because I find that this is one of the most difficult things for men to grasp. This morning after I left the service at 8:30 and was sitting around a table with some who had been in the eight-thirty service, this question came up again of the relationship of the will in our salvation.

The Bible teaches that we have a will, that we do make decisions. But the Bible teaches that the will is a secondary agent. The will acts in accordance with our nature and our nature affected by the fall is wicked and rebellious against God. Therefore, the decisions of the will which are a response to the inmost disposition of a man are always decisions contrary to the will of God. I’ve said this over and over again, and I say it again, because there are always some strangers in the midst. My old Bible teacher used to say that we never make a decision of the will that is favorable to God unless God has previously “jiggled our willer.” [Laughter]

Now that is biblical teaching. It’s hard for men to understand that. But nevertheless it is true. It is basic to the gospel of the Lord Jesus. The responses that men make do not arise ultimately from the heart of men; ultimately they arise from God’s working. That’s why salvation is of the Lord. So when we read these men cry out, have mercy upon us, it’s obvious that God has already wrought in their will, and they are crying out now in response to what he has done.

Their wills naturally were obstinate. They were rebellious. Their understanding was darkened. Their affections were depraved. They were blind to the things that really

counted. That’s the way we are born. We are born in our sin. You know you can speak to someone about the wonders of this creation about us. I know that is difficult in Texas, but nevertheless there are some things in Texas that are beautiful. I hope to see them some day. [Laughter] No seriously, now, I’ve lived Texas longer than any place else; I consider myself a Texan now, at least in part.

We can talk to men about the beauties of and the wonders of his divine creation, and men are able to understand with us. They can speak of the wonders of creation themselves, but when we turn to speak to them of the wonders of the New Covenant and of the blood that was shed by which we have everlasting life, by which we are brought into the family of God, by which we are justified, by which we become the children of God, then the beauties of the person of the Redeemer and the work of the Redeemer seem as nothing as foolishness to them. They do not understand them at all.

So these men cry out humbly with confessions of their own unworthiness, and the message that they proclaim is that the Lord Jesus is the Lord and the Messiah. It’s striking to me that these blind men, these poor blind men, give the glory to the Lord Jesus that the leaders the religious leaders in Jerusalem did not.

They did not own him as Lord. They rebelled against the very idea and they did not accept him as the son of David. They rebelled against that idea. So these two poor blind men who did not have the religious training, and no doubt the religious experiences that the Pharisees and the Sadducees did, had by the grace of God been enabled to understand things that religious leaders do not. There is a great lesson in that.

Well the Lord’s reaction to this is remarkable. A cry of need brings him to a complete stop. We read in verse 32, “And Jesus stood still.” Isn’t that striking? When Joshua was here in his historical ministry in the Old Testament recorded in the Book of Joshua, Joshua spoke to the sun and the sun and the moon stood still. Remarkable miracle. But here are two blind men who address the Son of Righteousness – for that is

one our Lord’s titles – and the Son of Righteousness stops at their request. It seems as if it is even a greater miracle than that performed by Joshua in the Old Testament.

Reminds us that the apostle says that he is rich unto all that call on him. If you’re in the audience this morning and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus, let me assure you that if you call upon him, he is rich unto those that call unto him. So he stopped. And interestingly those people that were trying to keep these two men quiet – shut up, shut up – are told by the Lord Jesus to go get the blind men. I think that’s kind of ironical. These people who were attempting to shut the blind men are forced to do errands for the blind men. And so they go off and get the blind men and they are brought into the presence of the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus said, what do you want me to do?

Now isn’t it striking too the way Mark describes the way that Bartimaeus came to the Lord Jesus? You can see the blind man with his coat. It probably was the only coat that he had or ever hoped to have. He knew that there were times when he needed that desperately, but Mark says he threw away his garment and came to the Lord Jesus.

You know if I were an artist. I think the most prolific source of artistry would be the Bible itself. I’ve said to you once before that one of the most striking things in all of the New Testament to me is when the Lord Jesus stood up in the boat in the midst of the storm, preparatory to saying, stop, or be muzzled ,and there came a great calm. And here, as Bartimaeus threw away his cloak, figurative of the fact that everything must go when we come to the Lord Jesus – as Paul said, “He suffered the loss of all things as he came to Christ.” What a beautiful picture that is. And he came to Jesus, Mark says. There’s nothing more fundamental, nothing more significant, nothing more necessary in life than to come to the Lord Jesus.

I think one of the saddest things in the world is for a man to go through life shine in his school work, shine in his college work, graduate near the top of his class, become a successful businessman, be successful in business, come to the end of his days retired,

and then to be placed in a grave like the rest of the people who have lived up to this time without the knowledge of Jesus Christ. What a pitiful what a pitiful thing. To come to the Lord Jesus is the fundamental thing. To think of it. To become the President of General Motors, but not know Christ. To be the Chairman of the Board of Texas Instruments but not know Jesus Christ, what a failure.

So the Lord said, what do you want? These men have just no doubt been acquainted with the words the Lord Jesus had said not long before this: the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister. And so they in effect challenged him. You said you come to minister, well, minister that we may see again that we may have our eyesight. One of the manuscripts I think I mentioned as I was reading the Matthian account—at least I did in the morning—they requested, Lord that our eyes may be opened, that we may see Thee. That’s a very fitting addition. I’m sure that’s the way they thought, having called out, O Lord Thou son of David. That’s what they were thinking. But first of all that our eyes may be opened.

And then the healing is described in the last verse, and I want you to notice just briefly that there are outward means, inward means, and ultimate means. The text of Scripture says, “So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes.” Now that was the touch of sympathy. Blind men no doubt needed the encouragement of the personal touch, and it’s a beautiful expression of the true humanity of Lord Jesus who understands all of our human needs. He touched them. But it also is an identification, for to touch, to lay hands upon was a sign of identification.

And all he was saying, symbolically, was, as he touched them, yes I am sympathetic with your condition. I identify with your sin – not that I’m a sinner – but it is for sin that I have come. And the apostle puts it I think very succinctly, He was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. And so he identified himself with suffering sinning humanity for he shall die for sinners.

Mark says that he said to him your faith has made you whole. Incidentally, it was faith not adulterated by sight. They couldn’t be saved by sight; they had no sight. Our churches give you the impression that our faith is really grounded in a great deal of sight, for as we draw up to church buildings we are impressed. They are magnificent structures. And usually there’s a cross sticking above them. And then you enter, and you enter into the auditorium.

Now I know our auditorium is very simple. That’s the way we like it. As a matter of fact that’s the way the earliest churches in this country were constructed, and that’s the reason why this auditorium is simple. But many of our churches, and the churches in which I’ve grown up are very impressive, and the services are very impressive. The men come in and they are dressed in different kinds of clothes. They are either dressed in a robe, or they are dressed in clerical garb with the round clerical collar. That, incidentally, is not a slipped halo. [Laughter]

And when they stand in the pulpit, they not only stand in the pulpit but they go through motions that are designed to impress our senses. They twist. They turn. They genuflect. They kneel. They bow. They frequently take things and do things with them. They stand before the altar, so-called. The whole impression seems to be, faith does come by sight, to some extent at least. They impress us.

But the Lord Jesus said, your faith—not your humility, not your persistence, not your purposefulness—your faith has made you whole. God has so worked that he has given you faith, and that faith is the basis of your salvation. The ultimate means is his compassion. Jesus had compassion on them. Paul says he speaks about God who was rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he had loved us. And so out of compassion, the Lord Jesus responded to what he had produced in their hearts and gave them the pronouncement that they were now whole forgiven men.

And not only that, but their eyes were opened. Men speak of merits. Proud men get down upon their knees and offer prayers to God, thinking that their prayers are the

means of God’s blessing. But the wind sweeps the prayers away, for God does not hear that kind of prayer. When the messenger of mercy the Lord Jesus came to this earth, he did not enter into the Hiltons and the Sheratons and the Holiday Inns and the Howard Johnson Inns, but he came to the inn of the broken heart and the contrite spirit, because God responds to those who acknowledge that they have nothing with which to commend themselves to the Lord.

Well the result of the healing is that they followed him, and Luke tells us that they glorified God, which led to the praise of the Lord by the people. What a beautiful thing that is, too. When I was growing up in the Presbyterian Church, there was put in my hands the shorter catechism, and I was told to memorize it. Now that is all very vague in my mind because that was back in the first millennium. [Laughter] There are only little snatches that I remember from that. Since then, of course, I’ve looked at the confession and studied it, and many things have come back but there were several things that persisted through my days of spiritual darkness, and one of them was the purpose for men being here. Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And when the Lord Jesus worked in the hearts of these two blind men, they were so happy over what God had done to them and they so praised God that they glorified God. They had reached that ultimate goal for which we are here in this earth to glorify him.

Now the Lord Jesus has changed his position. He’s no longer here in our midst. He’s at the right hand of the majesty on high, but it’s still true, my dear friends, that Jesus of Nazareth passes by. He does not do it physically. He does it through his word and through his spirit. And we have listened as we have read the word of God to the exposition of the power Jesus Christ to heal. And if there is someone in our audience this morning who under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has been brought to the conviction of his sin, he stands ready and waiting to deliver from the blindness of our heart, to bring you into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus which means everlasting life.

Remembering that in a few moments the Lord Jesus will die upon the cross at Calvary for sinners, making it possible for all of our sin and guilt and condemnation to be washed totally clean. And if God has brought in your heart the desire he brought into the hearts of these blind men for healing, may God help you deep down within the recesses of your being to cry out, O Lord Thou son of David, have mercy upon me. And this great miracle of healing will be accomplished spiritually again. May God speak to your heart to that end. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we know that we have only inadequately expressed the greatness of the healing ministry of the Lord Jesus, but we do know deep down within us, Lord, what Thou hast done for us and what Thou art able to do for men who come through the Spirit's enablement to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of sinners.

And Lord, if there should be some one present in this auditorium, one little child, perhaps one young man, one young woman, one elderly man or woman in whom the Holy Spirit has worked, O God, by the Holy Spirit, bring to their inmost being that urgent request, O Lord Thou son of David have mercy upon me.

Accomplish, Lord the supernatural work of the new birth.

May grace mercy and peace go with us.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.