

# Sight and Voice for the Harassed and Helpless

Thomas Robinson, *Learning at Jesus' Side*, 7, July 8, 2012

## Matthew 9:27-38

<sup>27</sup> And as Jesus passed on from there, **two blind men** followed him, crying aloud, "*Have mercy on us, Son of David.*"

<sup>28</sup> When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "*Do you believe that I am able to do this?*"

They said to him, "*Yes, Lord.*"

<sup>29</sup> Then he touched their eyes, saying, "*According to your faith be it done to you.*"

<sup>30</sup> And **their eyes were opened**. And Jesus sternly warned them, "*See that no one knows about it.*" <sup>31</sup> But they went away and **spread his fame** through all that district.

<sup>32</sup> As they were going away, behold, a **demon-oppressed man** who was **mute** was brought to him. <sup>33</sup> And when the demon had been cast out, **the mute man spoke**.

And the crowds marveled, saying, "*Never was anything like this seen in Israel.*"

<sup>34</sup> But the Pharisees said, "*He casts out demons by the prince of demons.*"

<sup>35</sup> And **Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching** in their synagogues and **proclaiming the good news of the kingdom** and **healing** every disease and every affliction.

<sup>36</sup> When **he saw the crowds, his heart went out** for them, because they were **harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd**.

<sup>37</sup> Then he said to **his disciples**, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*"

## Matthew 1:1

<sup>1</sup> The book of origin of Jesus Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham.

## Matthew 4:23-25

<sup>23</sup> And he went throughout all Galilee, **teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people**.

<sup>24</sup> So **his fame spread** throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. <sup>25</sup> And **great crowds** followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and Jerusalem and Judea, and beyond the Jordan."

## Matthew 12:22-24, 28

<sup>22</sup> Then a **demon-oppressed man** who was **blind** and **mute** was brought to him, and **he healed him**, so that **the man spoke and saw**. <sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, "*Can this be the Son of David?*"

<sup>24</sup> But when the **Pharisees** heard it, they said, "*It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.*" ...

<sup>28</sup> "*But (Jesus said) if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*"

## Matthew 20:30-34

<sup>30</sup> And behold, there were **two blind men** sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "*Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!*" <sup>31</sup> The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "*Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!*" <sup>32</sup> And stopping, Jesus called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" <sup>33</sup> They said to him, "*Lord, let our eyes be opened.*" <sup>34</sup> And **Jesus' heart went out to them** and he **touched their eyes**, and immediately they **recovered their sight and followed him**.

## Ezekiel 34:2-5

<sup>2</sup>“Son of man, prophesy against the **shepherds of Israel**... Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? <sup>3</sup> You ... do not feed the sheep. <sup>4</sup> The **weak** you have not strengthened, **the sick** you have not healed, ... **the lost** you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. <sup>5</sup> So **they were scattered, because there was no shepherd**, and they became **food for all the wild beasts**.”

## Isaiah 35:4-6

<sup>4</sup> Say to those with fearful heart, “Be strong; fear not! **Behold, your God ... will come and save you.**”

<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of **the blind** shall be opened, and the ears of **the deaf** unstopped; <sup>6</sup> then shall **the lame** man leap like a deer, and the tongue of **the mute** sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert....

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## Jesus and the Harassed and Helpless

Matthew brings us full circle, marked by repeating his description of Jesus' ministry (4:23/9:35).

Jesus' astonishing teaching, his amazing deeds, his life-transforming call to discipleship.

Bringing into view, into expression, into life the Kingdom of God. Challenging us to seek it.

Jesus enacts it not in a monastic desert or in a palace of power but among suffering people.

He hears the cry for mercy (9:13/Hos 6:6). His heart goes out (*splangchnizesthai*). He takes our

weaknesses on himself (8:17/Isa 53:4). His words call us to new righteousness as God's children.

But there is a sharp edge! The people are “harassed and helpless” because of a profound failure

of leaders, especially among the Temple Chief Priests but also the Pharisees and others.

Every word and deed of Jesus challenges things as they are and points to confrontation.

## The ‘Son of David’ Opens Eyes; the Silenced Gets Back His Voice.

Matthew completes the series of 10 deeds of Jesus with two miracles narrated very briefly to

focus on their meaning. There were so many healings! Mt freely chooses with us in mind.

Two blind men call to Jesus as “*Son of David*”— anointed king/ messiah in the Kingdom of God.

They trust Jesus' authority/power. In their blindness they clearly see the reality of Jesus.

Jesus transforms that faith-sight into physical sight – opened eyes, new freedom.

Demonic possession overwhelmed a person, took away freedom/identity/voice. Satan promises

freedom but always oppresses. Jesus gives back freedom/voice/self. This is what happens

when God comes to deliver his people (Isa 35:4-6). God wants loving children not slaves.

## Can We Tell the Demonic from the Divine?

But in the midst of this there are strange twists. The blind men believe in Jesus' authority but

then disobey his instructions. Jesus seems to set it up. His authority never coerces people.

Blindness, demons, storms, diseases know he is irresistible, but people easily resist Jesus.

More than that. Religious leaders (Pharisees) look at Jesus' words and deeds and see them as

demonic: “He looks good, but Jesus is a deceptive double agent, he's using Satan's power to do things that tempt Israel away from obedience to Torah and pure Temple worship.”

This is the deep challenge of the Kingdom of God. It doesn't look like a kingdom we can recognize.

No place to lay his head? Tax collectors & sinners? No fasting? Forgiving sins?— Crucified

King? It takes a blind person or “*harassed and helpless*” to see the “*Son of David*” in Jesus.

## The Harvest and the Laborers

But it is God's kingdom, his work, his harvest. Jesus calls us to pray/entreat, not because God

doesn't know his work, but so that we begin to feel with his heart and work as Jesus works.