



“Joining the Battle...”

Matthew 9:27-38

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Matthew 9:27-38 When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David,

have mercy on us!" 28 And when He had come into 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." 29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." 30 And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it." 31 But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. 32 As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. 33 And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" 34 But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." 35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few." 38 "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

2 Timothy 3:1-9 You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! They are the kind who work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires. (Such women are forever following new teachings, but they are never able to understand the truth.) These teachers oppose the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. They have depraved minds and a counterfeit faith. But they won't get away with this for long. Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are, just as with Jannes and Jambres.

I firstly find it an astonishing premise herein these two “blind men” still managed to find Jesus despite their overt handicap. How is it that these blind men could “see” the truth when men of 20/20 vision are often seemingly unable? Ours is an age wherein we profess great depth of insight and a keen intellectual perception, and yet we fulfill the proverbial saying that we “cannot see the forest through the trees.”

Ours is a day where we attempt to embrace a revisioned spiritualism, but we have wholly rejected the foundational premise on which that same revised belief system was originally built. Certainly we know that if the fundamental backbone and framework of a premise stinks, any conclusion built off of such would certainly stink too! Why would anyone in their right mind embrace the “new Christianity” when one of its classic

trademarks is to negate and reject the principles of its own forbearers as intolerant, sexist, discriminatory, absent of truth and facts and without place in a relative age? If the basement is rotting, why would I want to live in the house built on top of it?

The reality is, we have not so much rejected the fact we *need* God, as we have just rejected ***the God we need!*** We want ...we ***need***, to fulfill the spiritual vacuum that is inside us, but we want to build that house based on pure ascetics, without any consideration for function and durability. It seems to matter little that such fails to hold up to the scrutiny of history, or even if such fails to actually work whatsoever! It's just a façade. A Hollywood stage prop that looks good from the front, but is vacant and empty in the back...just propped up for appearance sake.

In the book of Revelation...in Christ's letters to the seven churches, there are many warnings of various stripes. One of the churches warned was the church in Sardis. The Bridgeway Commentary says the following concerning this church: *The church in Sardis had so much followed the ways of the society around it that it was Christian in name only. Spiritually it was dead. The Lord of the church can give it new life through the Spirit, but first the believers must wake up, change their ways, and determine to follow the teaching of the gospel they first believed. If not, swift judgment will fall upon them.*

It all so tends to cast doubt on just who is really "blind."

These two men...despite not being able to visually see Jesus, still found Him. I have no doubt that our lives are somewhat guided by an internal "homing beacon" that calls us to God...calls us like salmon back to the place we were birthed...back to the garden...back to Creator that sought to walk with His creation in the 'cool of the morning.' (Genesis 3:8) The results of such "swallows returning to Capistrano" makes for a great earthly chaos that manifests in nations, and cultures, and communities, and yet even cripples the individual in his fight to get home or the battle to avoid it.

Herein we have two 'blind men' that seem to see in ways that maybe many of us fail to. Makes one wonder just who really IS blind! They could not see what Jesus was doing any more than we can most of the time. But oh how we try! We want to see it...to see what He is doing...where He is going...where He is taking us...what He has done behind the scene! We want to see where He is going and what He is doing before we enlist. We adhere white-knuckled to the old adage where we are told to "trust your eyes!" But Jesus never calls us to pursue such a path, but rather we are told "*Faith cometh by **hearing**, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Romans 10:17).

What these men *could* see, that we that are sighted seem so often incapable of seeing, was their ***true state***. These men didn't need to be reminded that they were blind...they knew very well that they were blind! John 9:39-41 *Then Jesus told him, "I entered this world to render judgment — to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind." Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, "Are you saying we're blind?" "If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty," Jesus replied. "But you remain guilty because you claim you can see.*

These religious elitists were guilty because they believed themselves to be a-ok with God when they were not. They thought they could see their state and the world at large very clearly and accurately, but because of such a wilful blindness, they were "judged guilty." Because God clearly states that we are all "desperately wicked", and that no one is really righteous and no one really does good... "*no not one.*"(Romans 3:10-12)

Revelation 3:17 says "...you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' —and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, **blind**, and naked..."

These “blind men” knew who they were and that they were blind and that they needed the intervention of God and His mercy. This is what set these men apart from the rest! Not that they couldn’t see. But rather that they in fact *could* see better than most! There are a lot of people who have the ability of sight that see nothing but darkness and then there are those that are blind in sight but see plenty of their own state and often a whole lot more than that!

Jesus asked them... “*do you believe that I can heal you?*” Such a question is pointless to those who fail to know they actually *need* healed! We often fail in our evangelistic attempts because we focus on trying to convince people that Jesus can heal them when they don’t even feel that they *need* to be healed! And the worst offenders of all are the religious offenders that are, as Romans 2 expounds, convinced that they “*are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God’s law gives you complete knowledge and truth.*” (Romans 2:19-20) But their actions...according to verse 24 of Romans 2, are often the cause of the world “*...blaspheme(ing) the name of God....*”

Jesus was merciful, but He was not without demand. He was not just walking down the road waving a magic wand healing everything in sight. His grace was present indeed! But there was the requirement of the individual to both *believe* and *act* according to that belief! There is the need to *respond* for each and every one of us. Because the fact is we are *all* blind, and we all must realize that and move to receive the mercy of the “healer.”

The second story tells us a different account. One where this man had to be brought to Jesus. A man who was demon possessed and because of such he could not speak. In our modern science run culture, we are frankly uncomfortable with the idea...or at least the public discussion of, the concept of demonic activity, much less the concept of demonic possession.

But our deliberate ignorance of such is to our own hurt. Rejecting a reality does not make it go away. Certainly there is evil in this world. By default it is the status quo in the fallen world in which we live. But then there is a more tangible and substantial evil that manifests itself in form and function. Having seen such up close and personal in India, and even here in the US, I need little convincing that such activity exists.

For sure, I am not one to find demons under every rock. They are of finite number, and I would think active most often against high profile targets. But to write such off as the stuff of cheap Hollywood B-flicks would be a mistake. I personally believe that there is a whole world of unseen spiritual battle going on around us every day. We are called truly to “minister with a bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other.”

There is also demonic *oppression*. Such denotes not *control* but rather causing distress and trouble. We must be careful here again. For we can be apt to blame situations we find ourselves in simply on demonic activity, when honestly, left to ourselves, we can create some real messes in our lives through our own lusts, emotions, and misguided passions! I believe the “other world” is counting on that fact! Most of us frankly do not need offensive demonic oppression to screw up our lives, we just need to be left to ourselves! But such darkness and activity undoubtedly exists out there even today.

This man however was indeed *possessed*. Meaning he was controlled by an ‘other world entity’ that dictated his movements and actions. And true to form, the presence of a demon *took from him* while the promises they make are notoriously in the form of the positive. For one thing Satan *always* is and his fallen angels with him, is they are all liars. Masters in the form of “bait and switch.” Promising you the world and instead taking from you what little you already had. No “deals” are ever made with Satan. He hates you and he hates God.

However, the believer ...the *true* believer, is protected. 1 John 4:4 promises us that “*greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.*” However, I must reiterate, such a promise is specific to those who are truly reborn children of God and are possessed by a different Spirit already...the Spirit of God. In such folks, there is no room for any other entity of control. God doesn’t “share space” within his temples!

The people on the street saw this miraculous and were “wow’d” by the manifest of God in their midst! But the pious and self-righteous religious elite...forever consistent, instead attributed such power to Satan. I guess if you don’t know the power of God in your own living, you wouldn’t recognize such even if it bit you! Such ‘pointed fingers’ are born out of jealousy, bitterness, and hatred. They had already called the Christians a cult, and now they were claiming that all the good that came out of them was rooted in Satan, not Jehovah God. It’s an M.O. that is still classic today.

What moved Jesus to engage mankind was love and compassion. From the stories we read herein and throughout the gospels and even throughout the tenure of the early church, we can see that there was and is nothing neat and clean about missional living. It was universally messy. Much of the wider church today seeks rather to portray a neat and tidy organization where people play nice with one another and “good” is overwhelming present if not overt. But that is not the war we see in the gospels. Such is not what was happening in the “Life and Times of Jesus Christ.” No, we find herein rather battle after battle. You can have a nice clean barn, but if it is that pristine, I would argue that you aren’t really doing any serious farming.

It is just that fact that drives most of us from the battle front. How we love the blessings and benefits of the Christian life! But it is something altogether different to actually join the fight. It is similar to the thinking that we love the freedom that living in America affords us, but that we are pacifists when it comes to personally involving ourselves in earning it. It is forever the tendency of man to let someone else do it.

It is the same in the battle for the kingdom. We instinctively know that there is work to be done, but we are spiritually lazy and often frankly afraid. We all tend to believe our lives have enough battles without willingly joining in on another. We are loath to admit that such living is in truth just idolatry! If other things are paramount in our lives, then factually we “have other god’s before Him.”

Our default position is to say we love God supremely, while our lives often say quite the opposite. We believe that our words and intentions trump our true actions. But they don’t. Such a premise holds no water in any other scenario of reality but we expect it to here in the realm of faith. We want to read Matthew 6:33 as “...seek first *a heart and compassion toward God* and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” But that is not how the verse reads! It says “... seek first *the kingdom of God* and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

That means we must be out there battling for the furthering of God’s work on this earth. Not because He *needs* you, but because He chooses to work with us and so often through us. And the absence of such a passionate participation on the front line speaks loudly our failure to understand our blindness and the darkness in the world around us. It says we do not love enough to act.

John 6:27 says "*Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.*"

Jesus then spoke those famous words: “*The harvest is great, but the workers are few.*” The impact of those words must fall beyond the foreign missionary organizations and the church boardrooms of America! The call is to go out to all of us! It is a call that says there are spiritually blind people out there...and those who are under demonic oppression and possession. And it is there that faith is made real, not merely in the personal and incidental quandaries of our lives. Faith plays out *out there* with *other people*. A *great harvest* is not a calm and comfortable church life, but mud and dung on our boots and calluses on our hands.

The battle is on. **Where are you...?**