

Dave Couch / General

Matthew / Matthew 9:27–38

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## How should we respond to the good news of the kingdom?

When was the last time you immersed yourself in a newspaper? Or swiped your way through a news website? Or sat down and watched a news broadcast?

We inhabit a world that is drenched in news, don't we? With just a few clicks or swipes, we can access information about events unfolding in the farthest corners of our world.

**News sparks reaction.** Every headline leads to action.

Three weeks ago I was gripped by the story of the mutiny happening in Russia. As the Wagner group were marching on Moscow. What was going to happen?

Some believed that this was the end of the Russian regime, whilst others thought it would meet its end early.

Some were amazed that these events were happening, whilst others were cynical that it was a Russian publicity plot.

Some people were concerned for the Russian people, others couldn't care less.

**News sparks reaction.** Every headline leads to action.

What went through your mind when you heard that news? Maybe you didn't even hear about it and are wondering what I'm going on about!

The point being though, **news sparks reaction.** Every headline leads to action.. As we hear news, we do something about it - even if it's ignoring it!

This section of Matthew has been all about news. You can see that in verse 35 of our passage:

[Matthew 9:35](#) (NIV 2011)

<sup>35</sup> Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, ***proclaiming the good news of the kingdom*** and healing every disease and illness.

That's a great summary of what we've seen so far. This is the end of that section.

In [Matthew 5-7](#) Jesus was proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, in what we call the Sermon on the Mount. And then in this bit of the gospel - [Matthew 8-9](#) - Jesus has been healing every disease and illness. He's shown that He is willing and able to rescue those living in the land of the shadow of death. That he has brought life, brought light, into this dark world.

And, as we come to the end of this section of Matthew's gospel, as everything is summed up, we're left with a question. As Matthew closes this bit of his gospel he wants us to ask **how should we respond to the good news of the Kingdom?**

What do you make of it? How does it change your thinking? What difference will it make to you tomorrow morning?

# By being all about the good news of the kingdom going out

Matthew wants us to be all about the good news of the Kingdom. To be gripped by it. To be totally enthralled by it. To see just how good this news is. To believe Jesus is able to save from death. To see that He really has come to do something new. And to care about those around us who haven't heard.

This morning the aim is that we all leave convinced that this really is good news that **everyone** needs to hear.

So as we see Jesus and we see His response here, we are called to reflect on our own, and bring them into line with his.

## 1) Believe that Jesus is able to save from death (v27-31)

And so let's look at the first point this morning. **Believe that Jesus is able to save from death.** That's our first thing to see. We're to **believe that Jesus is able to save from death.** Verses 27-31 of [Matthew 9](#).

Throughout these two chapters of Matthew, this has been the drumbeat. We've seen amazing things. Pharmacies closed. Hospital waiting lists empty. Even funeral homes boarded up.

Why? Because Jesus has been going around showing his ability to save from death.

We saw that a few weeks ago. We saw that these were more than mere stories of things Jesus did. These are more than assorted examples of Jesus' authority. All of these stories in [Matthew 8-9](#) are coming together to show that Jesus has come to give life in place of death.

And if we hadn't got that yet, last week with Sam, we actually encountered a dead girl. As clear as Matthew can make it. A dead girl being raised to life by Jesus. Jesus is able to save from death.

And in our passage this morning, we find two more miracles. And the first here in these verses is of two blind men.

Although they can't see, they have 20:20 vision of Jesus' ability to save from death.

We might be thinking to ourselves that blindness **is** an issue, but one that you can work around. But in Jesus' day it is debilitating. You couldn't work, you couldn't look after yourself. You had to rely on others giving you assistance. To be trapped in darkness all the time. The same eyesight as the dead. The dead, of course, see nothing. This is a physical condition that gives another angle to those 'dwelling in darkness', those 'under the **shadow** of death'.

But, notice that these guys see something that is blindingly obvious. They see that Jesus has come to do something about it. They see that Jesus is able to save from death.

So they follow him and they shout, verse 27, 'have mercy on us, Son of David'. They know that Jesus can do something their situation. They know that Jesus has come to show mercy to His people, to save His people.

They call him 'Son of David'. They recognise him as the King who is to come. The one who has been promised. The one that [Matthew 1:1](#) says:

[Matthew 1:1](#) (NIV 2011)

<sup>1</sup> This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah **the son of David**

They get who Jesus is, and what he's come to do. They've paid attention to what's going on in the towns and villages, and throw themselves on Jesus publicly. They call out. They want to receive mercy from him. They see Jesus as the solution to the shadow of death over this world.

And so, verse 28, as they go indoors, Jesus asks them **Do you believe that I am able to do this?** Their calling out and following makes it clear that they do. That's the point. That's what's going on here. Disciples, followers of Jesus, believe that Jesus has come to save from death. And that's what these two blind men believe.

So Jesus touches their eyes, and their sight is restored.

And that gets connected to their faith. Look at verse 29:

[Matthew 9:29](#) (NIV 2011)

'According to your faith let it be done to you';

What Jesus is saying here is that, because you trust me to do this, I shall do it.

Their faith. Their utter dependence. Their cry to Jesus for mercy is on display here.

And it pays off. Jesus shows he can. He opens their eyes. He restores their sight.

### **Not just telling stories of mere healings (v30-31)**

It's a simple story here isn't it?

Yet notice what Jesus says to them in verse 30. This might seem a bit weird. What does he say?

[Matthew 9:30](#) (NIV 2011)

Jesus warned them sternly, 'See that no one knows about this.'

Do you see? There's a wrong way to speak of Jesus. There's a wrong way to share the good news. That's what's going on here. Unless we properly understand the news, then it's not good news at all.

Jesus said something similar before in [Matthew 8:4](#). After healing the man with leprosy Jesus said don't tell anyone.

You see, these healings are amazing. But to stop there is to miss the actual news. The news that makes a difference. It would be like watching the news of the mutiny in Russia, and thinking that the Wagner group were simply wanting a stroll through the Russian woods.

This is the point. In the world filled with darkness, people can misunderstand - in fact people **do** misunderstand - what Jesus is doing.

We know we're on the right track when we see later in Matthew's gospel people misunderstanding what Jesus has come to do. Another time when the crowds are cheering for the 'Son of David', they're cheering on for a champion to come and defeat the Romans there and then. They've missed that Jesus has come early to demonstrate what he's going to do later.

In fact, just flick forward a page to [Matthew 11:2](#). In this chapter we see some of this confusion from John the Baptist. He says:

**Matthew 11:2-3 NIV 2011**

<sup>2</sup> When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples <sup>3</sup> to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'

Notice, John has heard about the **deeds**, about the works, about the things that Jesus is doing. The stories of the healings. But it's not enough. We'll come back to this in a moment.

But the point here is, there is more to what Jesus is doing than stories of healings can tell. And so he says to these men to not share news that sells him short. These are amazing stories, but to see only a bit of them is to miss the mark.

Jesus has come to save those under the power of death, not simply to make people's life more comfortable.

Jesus has come to save those living in darkness, not to just tell a great story.

## Application

There are many people, many churches out there that sell Jesus short. So, we have to ask this morning, how do we, here, portray Jesus? We have to realise that Jesus opens the eyes of the blind. And whilst people are still in the dark, it can be hard to see what Jesus is truly about.

Perhaps you're here this morning and you don't know what the fuss about Jesus is all about. As you hear the news about Jesus are you seeing anything? Are you seeing a glimmer of light?

We want to continue to hear the full message of Jesus here in this Gospel. So why don't you ask Jesus to show you some more?

## 2) See that something new is here (v32-34)

The second thing we see in our response to Jesus is there in verses 32-34. This is our second point this morning: **See that something new is here**. See that something new is here.

We have another person brought to Jesus, and again its a picture of someone under the power of death. This time they're as silent of the grave. It's a man who is deaf and mute - those two things are the same word in Jesus' day.

Yet notice what's causing this man's silence. It's demon-possession. We saw this a few weeks back, if you want to think about that some more.

And in the space of two verses. Two sentences. Jesus has driven the demon out. Wham, bam. The job is done.

But notice the change here. The man is silent in verse 32, and then, verse 33, 'the man who had been mute spoke'.

Jesus is able to take those who are silent - silent as the grave - and give them something to shout about. This man is now left free to speak the truth.

So what's going on here? Is this just another story that you could tell someone about Jesus? We've just been saying that that would be a poor response.

Instead, we have to see more of what's going on here. You see, in healing the blind, and now the mute, Matthew expects us to pick up on something said earlier by the prophet Isaiah.

Back in [Isaiah 35](#), he said this:

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;  
<sup>4</sup> say to those with fearful hearts,  
'Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,

he will come with vengeance;

with divine retribution

he will come to save you.’

<sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened

and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

<sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer,

and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Isaiah, writing 700 years before Jesus, is looking forward to the day when God will come to rescue His people. His people whose knees are knocking, whose hands are shaking, who are fearful, worrying what's going to happen next. Living in the land of the shadow of death.

And Isaiah calls His people to continue to trust that God is coming.

And here's where it connects.

You'll know that day has come, that the Messiah has come when, verse 5:

**Isaiah 35:5 NIV 2011**

<sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened

and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

By pairing these two signs together, Matthew is showing that Jesus **has** come to bring about those promises. In fact, as we read that passage you might have noticed other bits from this section.

Again, we know we're on the right path because that's how Jesus answers John's question. Remember John is asking if Jesus really is the King who's meant to be coming. Really is the Son of David as those blind men say, and he responds - flick forward to [Matthew 11:4](#):

**Matthew 11:4-5 NIV 2011**

<sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

Jesus is saying, "you see these signs John, they're pointing to the fact that the King is here". Don't miss the new thing. **See that something new is here.**

### **Not just having an opinion on it (v33-34)**

Yet, there's a danger here. And that comes in the two responses we see in verses 33-34. Just like watching the news, it's easy to have an opinion on it. As I said earlier, the Russia news three weeks ago generated a lot of opinion!

But mere opinion doesn't cut it. Look at the first. [Matthew 9:33](#):

[Matthew 9:33](#) (NIV 2011)

The crowd was amazed and said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.'

The crowd has seen that this is a new thing. 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel'. They're amazed.

But amazement doesn't cut it. In fact, if they're amazed by this, we meant to be thinking they've missed the point.

Do you remember a few weeks ago the words said by the demons. I wonder if Matthew is linking us to that through these two demon situations. The demons back in [Matthew 8:29](#) reminded us of the calendar. What did they say?

[Matthew 8:29](#) (NIV 2011)

‘Have you come here to torture us *before* the appointed time?’

Jesus was doing a Blue Peter. He’d come ahead of time to show what he’s going to do in the end. Here’s one he made earlier.

You can look at these stories of Jesus and be amazed. I mean, that would be a right reaction to have wouldn’t it. We’ve had:

- A leper, looking like the living dead, cleansed completely.
- A paralysed, corpse-like servant, healed.
- Peter’s mother-in-law, at death’s door, raised to serve.
- Jesus’ disciples on a boat, rescued from the threat of death.
- Two men, demon possessed, rescued from the power of death
- Another corpse-like paralytic raised with a word, rescued from the cause of death.
- A woman with bleeding healed.
- That, in the middle of the story of a young girl, dead, raised to life.
- Plus the blind men and the mute man here.

If you’re not amazed, there’s something wrong with you. It’s truly amazing stuff.

But to simply look at the sign and miss the destination is disastrous. And to be muddled at the timings too knocks everything off course.

If you’re looking, this morning, for signs here and now. If you’re always looking for the miracle story. If you’re all about this moment, then you’re missing that Jesus is pointing us to a greater future, change your mind this morning!

Satan loves to keep us focussed on the here and now. It’s one of his main tactics. To take our eyes off the future.

How much more should we be amazed if we understand what these miracles truly mean! That they’re a mere foretaste, a demonstration, of the Kingdom in all its glory. A window through which we can see Jesus utterly defeating death itself. Of that final day, when

**Revelation 21:4** NIV 2011

<sup>4</sup> “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’

Don’t settle for amazement now, follow the signs to the destination!

And definitely don’t react like the Pharisees! Verse 34:

**Matthew 9:34** NIV 2011

<sup>34</sup> But the Pharisees said, ‘It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.’

Notice, they don’t dispute the miracles of Jesus. They’ve seen them with their two eyes. But they’re dangerously dismissive.

They see the life-giving work of Jesus and attribute it to the powers of the dead.

They see that Jesus is coming to save from the shadow of death, but they claim he's working for the power of death.

They don't want what Jesus is offering. They don't want to align with God's plan. In fact, they're blind. They're in the dark.

What do you make of their reaction? We're meant to be horrified. Given how amazing this truth is, it's breathtakingly dismissive.

Don't simply have an opinion this morning. Don't simply comment on Jesus here. Instead, see that he has come to do the new thing that God had promised all along. Throw yourself on him. Open your mouths and declare this good news to those around you.

### 3) Have compassion for the lost (v35-38)

In fact, that's our third thing this morning, **have compassion for the lost**. Verses 35-38.

If we truly believe that Jesus is able to save from death, and we've seen that the new thing really is here. It should cause us to look around and have compassion for the lost.

Look at verse 36:

**Matthew 9:36 NIV 2011**

<sup>36</sup> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I look out at people around me, I don't naturally see them the way Jesus sees them. As I walk through Hemel high street. As I sit down in the coffee shop. As I drop the kids at school.

Jesus looks and sees the crowds. He sees those who are not following him yet. Those who are just going about their daily business, and He sees them as sheep without a shepherd.

Izzie and I visit Wales a fair amount, and when I see a sheep without a shepherd I see an annoyance. We're driving around the narrow roads, and all of a sudden there is just a sheep there. Standing in the middle of the road. I stare at it, it stares at me, and nothing happens. We're stuck. Sheep are an annoyance.

Only when the sound of the quad-bike is heard, do I have any hope that something will be done. It's someone else's job to deal with. Let them do it.

I wonder if our approach to those around us can be similar to me and sheep. People around are fine until they get in our way. If you've ever been to London and got stuck behind a tourist, you know what I'm talking about! People around us are fine, until they get in our way, then they're just an annoyance.

But that's part of the point here. As we see how Jesus looks at these crowds we're meant to reflect on how **He** sees them. And as we follow Jesus, as His disciples, we follow how he thinks, we follow how he acts. And so we should have compassion on those around us.

If we keep this statement in context, we'll notice it follows from verse 35. Verse 35 is a summary of this whole section, of what Jesus has been doing. In fact, it's almost a repeat of what was said back in chapter 4. Flick back to [Matthew 4:23](#). That's the start of this section of Matthew's Gospel, we're at the end of it now.

**Matthew 4:23 NIV 2011**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and illness among the people.



That's what Matthew wants us to see Jesus has been doing. He went up on the mountain, chapters 5-7, to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. And then chapters 8-9 he healed every disease and illness among the people to show what that kingdom is going to look like before the time.

And so, come back with me to [Matthew 9](#), in verse 36 we get Jesus' thoughts on what's happened so far. Jesus has done amazing things, we've seen that already. But it's only scratched the surface. There are still crowds of people who need to hear the good news. In Jerusalem, in Israel, in the world. There are still crowds of people under the shadow of death. Crowds of people without hope.

Look at the wording here. These people are harassed and helpless. Are those words we'd use of people in our lives? Our co-workers? Our family? Our friends?

When I look out at people they seem pretty sorted. Perhaps the occasional blip, but otherwise fine. But Jesus sees them as harassed and helpless.

When I look out I see people who seem to know what they're doing. Self-sufficient. Capable on their own. But Jesus sees them as sheep without a shepherd.

If you're like me this morning, we need to change our minds. We're called to follow Jesus, and see people as He does.

Because outside of Jesus, everyone is without hope because the Kingdom is near. Judgement is coming. If we believe that the Kingdom is near, we have to believe that there are people who are harassed and hopeless.

And without Jesus people are stuck living in the shadow of death. Living in darkness. The world around us knows that really. There is no-one who can escape that without the good news of Jesus.

No matter how people seem, what they are underneath is still the same.

So what's the solution? Jesus turns to his disciples. Remember a disciple is someone who follow him. And he says, verse 37:

[Matthew 9:37-38](#) (NIV 2011)

'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

What do you hear Jesus saying there? If you were to put it in your own words, what would you say? Let me read those words again:

**The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.**

I reckon we read most of that sentence and think the complete opposite of what Jesus is actually saying! Perhaps I'm wrong here.

But I tend to think 'the harvest is few, and the workers are plentiful'. Do people really want to hear about Jesus today? I don't tend to think so.

And aren't there so many church workers out there? Those who are going to Bible colleges, missionaries, church leaders.

But take another look. That isn't what Jesus is saying, is He? He says the harvest is plentiful. Just notice there, there is a harvest! And it is plentiful, it's not measly.

And when Jesus says workers he's not saying 'full-time paid gospel ministers'. Remember who he's speaking to. Verse 37, it's his disciples. Those who follow him.

It's really important we see this. It's not leaders Jesus is calling for. It's workers. And in Matthew's gospel a worker is a disciple of Jesus. Someone who believes Jesus can save from death. Someone who's seen



that the new thing is here, and so, someone who goes out and has compassion on the lost and tells them the good news of the kingdom!

If you carried on reading through Matthew's gospel, that's what you would see come up next. I'd encourage you to keep reading. Come and chat more about it if you do.

But big thing here, verse 39, Jesus says that if you're a disciple:

**Matthew 9:38 NIV 2011**

<sup>38</sup> Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

Ask, beg, plead with the Lord of the harvest. See the need to reach the people under the shadow of death. Have compassion on the lost, see them as Jesus sees them.

Ask the Lord to send out workers into His harvest field. Notice again, there is a harvest!

And, the implication for the prayer to be answered, is to then is **go**. That's how Matthew ends his gospel.

Believe that this good news really is good news, and share it with others around you.

That's both exciting **and** daunting, isn't it? God promises there is a harvest. There are people - there really are people - wanting to hear this good news. It really is good news.

Yet it **is** daunting. But if we look at people with Jesus' eyes. If we don't see people as self-sufficient. As fine. As disinterested. If we see them as truly in need. If we really believe the Kingdom is near. That'll change our thinking.

Rather than being daunted at having to speak, we'll be daunted at how many people **need** to speak to reach the world out there. We'll stop thinking of ourselves, and think of others.

And so we'll ask, we'll beg, we'll plead to the Lord for more workers - more disciples - to share that good news.

## So... pray for it to go out!

**Matthew 9:35 NIV 2011**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness.

**News sparks reaction.** Every headline leads to action.

How should we respond to that good news? The news that light has dawned. The news that Jesus has come to rescue those living in the land of the shadow of death.

Should it be like me on a Saturday morning, following the news of a mutiny in Russia. Looking on with interest. Have an opinion. But ultimately getting on with other things?

Of course not! If we believe this really is good news, we'll believe it and we'll have compassion on those who haven't heard it yet.

I'm going to leave God's spirit to work in our lives, hearts and minds as we think about that.

I'm also going to pray, plead, beg that Jesus would work that in us, to help us see things as he does, and spur us into action. Can I do that now?

Let's pray.