

MUTE DEMONIAC

Date: March 23, 2020

Scripture: Matthew 9:32-34

Good morning, Eleven22! My name is John Barringer, campus pastor at our Arlington campus and this Lent season we are working through some of the miracles of Jesus recorded in the gospels, seeing how each one of them points us to the greatest of all miracles, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The miracle of Jesus we're going to read today is found in Matthew 9:32-34. Let's read.

³² As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. ³³ 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." ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

Matthew 9:32-34

So backing up just a little bit in the gospel of Matthew, immediately following His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins to travel around Galilee and Matthew records a series of nine miracle stories, almost back to back. This which we just read being the final of those nine and the account itself is pretty short and self-explanatory. Jesus had just healed two blind men and while He's heading to the next city or village, He heals a mute man. This man was demon-oppressed. He's brought to Jesus. The demons cast out and the mute man speaks, the crowds marvel, they've never seen anything like this. And the Pharisees, not envious at all I'm sure, of Jesus and His power and not being able to

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deny the miraculous events that they themselves and the whole crowd of people just witnessed, attribute Jesus to be in league with the demon. That's how He was able to do this because He knows the demon. He's on the team of the demons. But Jesus, He doesn't even seem to have time to rebuttal such a ridiculous claim and He just moves on to the next place and keeps preaching and healing.

So our miracle testimony here is light on details. For example, we don't know anything about the man who was healed other than he spoke afterwards, which might have more to say about the miracle actually working than anything else. And Jesus does not speak at all during the story, but Matthew only needs three or four verses here to leave us with a lot to think about.

So just how does this miracle point to the miracle of all miracles, Jesus's resurrection from the dead? Well, for starters and maybe one which was most relevant to the original Jewish audience Matthew is writing for, Jesus is fulfilling prophecy. If you read your Bible in it's chronological order and you get to Matthew chapter nine and read this story, it should sound familiar to you. For example, in Isaiah chapter 35 he says, "When the Messiah come, the lame man would leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute would sing for joy." The same prophet later in chapter 53 prophesies, "A suffering servant will be pierced for our transgressions, but we'll later see his offspring and be satisfied." That sounds like a guy who died and then rose from death.

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So Jesus performing miracles here in such a specific way is Him by word and works pointing to the fulfillment of His messianic prophecies. Now, not many of us walk around having memorized all of the Old Testament prophecies, for sure, but the Pharisees would have and you would think that by watching this go down, they would be flipping out and excited that they are watching the prophecies unfold with the Messiah right in front of them.

But they miss it and they actually accused Christ of the opposite, right? He's not the Messiah. He's someone who's in league with the demons. But we are not missing it. Our New Testament is clear throughout its entire testimony that Jesus here, when He's healing people, is fulfilling very specific prophecies just as He will when He dies on the cross and rises from the grave.

Another way that this story points to the resurrection. Consider real quick, the story right before the one that we read just now, verses 27-31. I'll recap it real quick. These two blind men have been following Jesus as He travels and heals people and they call Him the son of David. They track Him down to a house. They come to Him on their own power. They're desperate for Jesus and when Jesus sees them, He says, "Do you believe that I'm able to do this, to heal them?" And they say, "Yes, Lord." I mean, these guys are big believers. They know exactly who Jesus is and believes in what He claims. And Jesus heals them saying, "According to your faith, may it be done to you."

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Crazy, incredible story. You read this and you're like, well, that makes a lot of sense. Jesus heals the ones who follow Him, who believe in Him, who know who He is. But then Matthew in the very next verse gives us this story with a man who is healed and could not be more opposite. He's demon-possessed. He can't do anything on his own, he's basically a human shell for this demon. He's brought to Jesus, not on his own power. Someone brings him along, I guess. He can't confess anything, can't talk and yet he's healed.

So just as the physical miracles of Jesus are for all people, so are the spiritual miracles of Jesus for all people. How could the resurrection of Jesus Christ count to you? Well, look at these two stories. You could be the guy who who's coming to Jesus under, "I come to church, I know who He is." Or you could be the guy who all your baggage is brought out in the open for everyone. The miracle of the resurrection does not become a part of our story based on how we come to Him. The miracle of the resurrection becomes a part of our story based on the work He first does in us, where we are in that moment. And yes, we become aware of it, our eyes are open, scales fall off our eyes. We believe, we confess, just as this mute man did. And then we prove it by walking the rest of our life in a manner worthy of such a calling.

But should we ever begin to think that we were spiritually born again because Jesus was just so proud of our faith and how hard we followed, we can go look at the story of the mute man being healed and we will be reminded that the incredible person with all the power and the mercy and grace, in these miraculous stories, whether it be here or on the

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cross, is not the one being healed and saved, but the Healer and the Savior.

Speaking of power, look at our story again. A demon-oppressed man is brought to Jesus and there is no struggle between the demon and Jesus, right? I mean this would make for a very boring and short Hollywood exorcism movie. It just says, "And when the demon had been cast out". Look, according to the Bible, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and the penalty for un-dealt with sin is being turned over to the enemy, to Satan.

So, with that scary reality, how can the believer be sure that they too will be resurrected like Jesus was? That they too will not be turned over to Satan like Jesus was not? Well, it's not because they stopped sinning. We don't. It's not because Satan isn't real and doesn't have power. He clearly is real and does have power, if you believe this story.

The believer shares in the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ because, in part, the demons obey Jesus. Jesus and the demons, or Jesus and Satan, they are not two equally big heavyweight boxers who go at it and we just happen to believe that we've got the winning guy. Jesus is in charge. It's more like there's one box in the ring and one referee who makes all the rules. Jesus says, "Be gone." and the demons are gone. He says, "Give me what is mine." and they will. So if you share in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, He points to you and says, "You are mine." and there is no power on heaven or earth that can stop that reality from being true.

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Lastly, just recently Pastor Joby has been preaching on the compassion of Jesus Christ. He says that he wants to teach us the Greek word *splagchnizomai*, that Jesus looked at the crowds and felt like on a gut level, inside, like a broken heart in this, *splagchnizomai*. That He wasn't doing what He did because He had to check off messianic boxes. He touched and healed people because He had great compassion from in His heart, soul level. He had compassion and love for them, as He has for us.

Well, in miraculous stories like this one, we can actually begin to see some version of a measure of that kind of love. How do you measure that love? How can you quantify it? Well, we will never fully understand or feel, ever, the size and magnitude of God's love for us, for sure, but these miracles get us pretty close. We can start to see a measure of His love, because just how much does Jesus love us? Well, enough apparently to interrupt the very natural order that He Himself created. The world works, nature works, in part the way God intended it to and so great is His compassion for us, His *splagchnizomai* for us, that He will interrupt and redirect that order.

The people in these stories, they are blind, lame, mute, things that by nature the body is not meant to fix on its own. And Jesus in these stories overrules that. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is probably the greatest of all interruptions. People die. You can put on cream, maybe you can get surgeries and live long and all that, but the best you could do is be like the person who lives the longest and break some record. You cannot

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beat death. It is a part of life. But Jesus did. And He didn't defeat death to break some records or because He had all that cream and surgeries. He did it so that whoever would believe in Him would not perish, but have ever-lasting life.

How much does Jesus love you? How much does Jesus love us, love me? Well, enough to interrupt the very nature of how things work. Enough to interrupt the creation, which He stepped back and looked at and said, "This is good."

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, first and foremost, after reading this story, we thank You for our own ability to see and hear, that we've got senses and they work. That is not everyone's story. So if it's our story, we thank You. And we thank You for the revelation of these miracles, not because they just show Your power, although they do, not just because they show us who's in charge, although they do, but because they point us to Your most miraculous miracle; that You died on the cross and resurrected from the grave and that that can count for us. Amen.