

# Truth You Can't Avoid — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 9:32–34 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 18, 2026 · *What Man Is This?*

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... for leading us in worship. If you've got a Bible, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 9. If you don't have a Bible, there should be one on the chair in front of you, underneath the chair, and you're welcome to use that Bible.

And as you're turning there — you've probably seen this dynamic in courtrooms, or maybe in football games as people are watching the replay tapes, maybe even in a doctor's office when they bring out the X-ray or the medical exam and begin to go over the implications of what they've found. The dynamic is that people can look at the same set of facts, and even though there's agreement on what the facts are — and maybe even on the implications of the facts — people will walk away with two totally different conclusions. **People can look at the same facts and yet assign totally different meanings.**

The most recent example is the court case with — oh, I can't remember her name now — but there was one juror who didn't agree with the rest of the jurors. How is it that they could all look at the same evidence and yet come to different conclusions? That's because evidence, in many cases, is not the end of the story. It's not just the evidence you have; it's the way you see the evidence that's in front of you.

And we see that dynamic in the news today. We have a lot of different cable news channels and news outlets — ABC and NBC and CNN — and those news agencies all have a common core set of facts. At least usually there's some small core set of facts. And yet they take those core facts and build on top of them what's called a narrative, and that narrative advances whatever agenda that company or that point of view may have. So the evidence is not really the most important thing in determining where a person goes with it. **The meaning that gets assigned to the evidence is what matters most.**

And if that's true as it relates to a court system, if that's true as it relates to the news and the replay you watch of your favorite football team — if it's true that our biases have a way of shaping the truth we derive from the facts — then it would also be true in your relationship with God. There are many people who would say, "As a skeptical person, I'd be happy to believe in God if I were just given more evidence." Or maybe you'd say, "If my brother or my sister could just see what I've seen, if they could know what I know about the Lord, then maybe they would believe." And maybe they would. But I would challenge that assumption, because it assumes a lot. Namely, it assumes that faith is a matter of evidence. Evidence is an element of having faith. The evidence matters, but it's not always the most important element. Sometimes you can have plenty of evidence, but the eyes through which you see the evidence shape it so much that you come to a different conclusion.

And that has been the dynamic of Matthew chapters 8 and 9. We've been in this series asking a single question: **What man is this?** Jesus had preached this banger sermon, and he comes down the mountain and has these various encounters, and with each encounter people have to give a verdict on that question: *What kind of man does what Jesus has done?* We've gone through a lot of different encounters, and with each one we get a little bit fuller picture. So here's a list of everything we've seen as we've gone from encounter to encounter.

If you haven't noticed, what Matthew seems to be doing is giving a list of encounters followed by a takeaway. You have three encounters followed by a discipleship takeaway on the conditions Jesus demands. Then you have three more miracles followed by a takeaway where Jesus calls Matthew the tax collector to follow him. And then there's another takeaway at the beginning — namely, Jesus is too big for your old box — followed by three different miracles. Today is the third and final set of three.

And in each one we're getting an answer to the question *What man is this?* — who is **willing to do what others won't**, healing the leper with a touch. What kind of man looks at a Roman centurion, who was hated by Jewish people, and is **impressed** not by his power but **by his modesty** and by his faith? What kind of man touches the crazy people in Capernaum — the demented, the marginalized, every sick, hurting person? He's **the bearer of our burdens**. He's **sovereign yet submitted** — sovereign to still the wind and waves, and yet submitted to enter into suffering. He's **unrivaled**: he can cast out demons by the thousands, and yet he's **rejected** by the very people who see it. He's **the Son of Man** — fully human — and yet he says and does things that only God can do. He forgives sins. He heals the blind. He's the Son of God; he's God the Son. He's **merciful towards sinners**, calling people like Matthew. He's **too big for our old box**; he's like new wine and old wineskins. He's **attentive to dependence** — not to what you'd think. He's not attentive to your strength and your being impressive. He's attentive to people who recognize they are helpless to meet their need, who need someone stronger than themselves so they can be healed. It's to those people that Jesus responds. And it's those people who see the truth about Jesus that no one

else can see. So we saw these blind men who could see more about Jesus than the people who had the front-row seat and were the most biblically educated.

Today we're going to see one more final truth. It's going to fill in the picture and give us the full monty. And that is that **Jesus is a truth you cannot avoid**. Jesus is one of those things where you have to decide: *What am I going to say in giving a verdict to this question? How am I going to answer the question, What man is this?* Because everyone's going to give a response. Jesus, and the truth about Jesus, is one of those things you simply cannot not have an opinion on. **He's a truth you can't avoid** — unlike the laundry at your house, or the dishes, or the taxes you keep kicking down the road.

When people would meet him in the first century, no one ever had a moderate reaction. No one ever kind of liked Jesus or thought, "He's an interesting fellow." John Stott is famous for saying that one of three reactions would happen: either they would hate him and try to kill him, they would become afraid of him and turn away, or they would love him and enthrone him as king of their lives. Those were the three reactions normal people had when they encountered the historical Jesus as we see him in the Scripture. So we can't just be indifferent, right? We can't just say, "He's kind of nice." That is itself a verdict, and it's insufficient in many ways.

And what Matthew wants us to see this morning with this third and final miracle is the types of responses people have — and that those responses are maybe good, but insufficient. Good in some ways, but insufficient in the ways that matter.

## The text

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So with that said, let's pick it up in Matthew 9. We're going to start in verse 32 and end in verse 34. Remember, this is the third of the final set of three miracles. He has healed two women, two blind men, and now this mute man — this man who's unable to speak, probably also unable to hear — and his reason for being disabled is demon possession.

*Just as they were going out, a demon-possessed man who was unable to speak was brought to him. (Matthew 9:32)*

We don't know who brings him. We don't know if they're friend or foe, but they're bringing this man who cannot talk to Jesus.

*When the demon had been driven out, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed, saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons." (Matthew 9:33–34)*

Now, if you just look at the verbs in this passage, you'll notice pretty quickly that Matthew is doing what he always does. Matthew is always stripping away details that distract from his main purpose in whatever he's trying to write. And in this case, what Matthew *doesn't* tell us is instructive. He doesn't tell us what the mute man says. He doesn't even tell us whether Jesus is the one who drives out the demon. He doesn't tell us what Jesus says. He doesn't tell us the aftereffects or how it went down. And all of those would have been questions the original readers would have wanted answered, because demon exorcism in the first century was a big, big deal. Only the most holy of men could do it, and there was a lot to it.

In first-century Second Temple literature there was a hierarchy of demons. There were names given to the different hierarchies, and there were different strategies for driving out demons. There were certain roots you would use, certain incantations you would say. The most famous example is someone using this stinky root and pulling a demon out through someone's nose, and then the demon knocked over all this water and all this stuff in the room. That's what people were excited about.

And yet Matthew strips it all away and actually refers to the miracle in what's called a subordinate clause, which is Matthew's way of saying, "Oh, by the way." It's almost a parenthetical statement. Matthew says, after the man had been healed, he spoke. A mute man who couldn't speak spoke after he got healed miraculously from this demon possession. It's almost after the fact. This thing that takes only the most holy of men, in only the most unique of circumstances, Jesus is able to do without saying a word — almost as an afterthought. That's the point Matthew wants us to see.

He only wants us to focus on three things: that a guy who couldn't talk talked, and that two groups of people said stuff in response. The crowd said, "This has never happened before." And then the Pharisees said, "That's incredible — he must be working for the devil." A guy who couldn't talk talked, and then two groups talked in response to his talking. That's this miracle. **Matthew is less focused on the miracle and more focused on the response people have to the miracle.** You seeing that?

And so what we need to see, and what we need to respond to this morning, is: How was their response insufficient? And what is the verdict that *we* give, and how is it going to be very different from theirs?

## 1. The truth of Jesus gets your attention

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So the first big point about the truth of Jesus is that **the truth of Jesus is going to get your attention.** This is obviously true in Matthew chapter 9, because the way Matthew describes it, people would have been going, "Where are the details? What did he say? What root did he use? What name did he invoke?" He doesn't mention any of those things, and all

of that was meant to grab your attention: **Jesus can do in a second what no one else can do at all.** It was getting their attention.

In our case today, it kind of gets my attention that this man was mute because of his demon. Demons don't always create physical disabilities, but in this case this demon caused a physical disability. And I've heard a lot of people misrepresent the Lord by twisting this passage and universalizing it, saying that all disability is demonic in some respect, and that if you can just drive out the demons, your disability will be healed. They use this text and some others to justify what is clearly not true in the Scriptures. Even Matthew himself, in Matthew chapter 4, very carefully distinguishes between disabilities that were demonically influenced and disabilities that were just disabilities (Matthew 4:24). In John chapter 9,<sup>1</sup> Jesus heals a blind man, and they ask the question, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" And Jesus says, "Neither" (John 9:2–3).

You need a category in your mind where disability just *is*. It's by virtue of living in a broken world. Sometimes it's not anything they did or anything you've done; it's just the reality of living where we live. But sometimes demons can cause physical harm. And the point is, **Jesus is sovereign over all of it.** He's sovereign over your disability irrespective of how it happened. He's sovereign over evil irrespective of what it's caused in your life. Jesus has authority.

And that grabbed their attention. But even though it grabbed their attention, they didn't accept the facts — or rather, they accepted that the facts happened. They accepted that the miracle was what it was. But they did not accept the implications. They were unwilling to accept the meaning of those facts.

And that's true for you and me today. We can acknowledge or see the facts about Jesus, and even though we see the facts truly and even kind of affirm that they are what they look like, we may not accept the implications enough that the truth changes our lives. And that's what you see in both responses. It gets the attention of the crowd and the Pharisees, but neither one embraces the implications of what it means for Jesus to have that power. The crowds, it says, are amazed, and they say, "Nothing like this has ever been seen." And then the Pharisees respond, "Yes, that was a miracle, but he has this power because he's working for the devil."

So let's look at both responses and why they were insufficient, and then we'll wrap it up with our personal response.

## 2. Don't just applaud the truth

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The first thing is the crowds, and it says they are **amazed**. This is a word Matthew uses throughout his Gospel. The crowds are often amazed by Jesus and his teaching. They're

amazed by his miracles. The disciples are amazed when Jesus calms the wind and the waves (Matthew 8:27). Even Pilate, the governor of Judea, is amazed when Jesus is giving testimony during his trial (Matthew 27:14). But **you can be amazed, and that amazement not be sufficient.** That's what Matthew wants us to see.

Why are they amazed? They're amazed because Jesus has done something that, from their perspective, they've not only never seen in their lives — they've never seen it in the history of Israel. So they're comparing Jesus to everything in the Old Testament. And if you've read the Old Testament, you know there's some pretty cool stuff in there: the splitting of the Red Sea, the splitting of the Jordan, the sun standing still, Elisha raising the dead. And yet they would look at the things they saw with Jesus — not only with this mute man, but the other nine miracles that are adjacent — and they would say of Jesus that he is doing things no one has ever done in the history of God's people.

There was a prophecy in the Old Testament — in Elijah, I'm sorry, in Isaiah 35 — that anticipated that when certain miracles happened, it was because God had arrived. Isaiah 35:4–6 says:<sup>2</sup>

*"Here is your God; vengeance is coming. God's retribution is coming; he will save you." (Isaiah 35:4)*

So he comes for salvation, but he also comes for judgment. How, then, will we know that God has arrived in Jerusalem? You'll know because:

*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy. (Isaiah 35:5–6)*

Does that sound familiar? Is that not exactly what we see laid out in Matthew chapters 8 and 9? This is the very thing Jesus pointed to when John the Baptist sent word to Jesus from prison.<sup>3</sup> He was doubting. He was struggling: "Jesus, if you're the Messiah — I'm about to get my head chopped off. What am I supposed to think?" And Jesus doesn't really address the specifics of his situation. What he says to John is, look to the miracles and let them talk:

*"The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news, and blessed is the one who isn't offended by me." (Matthew 11:5–6)*

So they were amazed, because what was happening was stuff that had never happened in the history of Israel. **But even though they were amazed, they did not give Jesus their allegiance.** And it would not be very long from then that these same crowds would turn and say of Jesus — who had preached the most incredible sermons and performed the most

incredible signs — that he had lost his mind. He's obviously not who he says he is, because Jesus would begin to talk to them about suffering and death.

In Matthew chapters 15 and 16, when Jesus goes to Caesarea Philippi, he asks the question, "Who do people say that I am?" And Peter says, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus says, "That's right." Now listen: it is written, it is required, that the Son of Man be handed over to the Romans and be crucified and buried. And Peter says, "No way, José" — bad joke — "No way, Jesus. That's not going to happen to you." And Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:13–23).

And it wasn't just his disciples who struggled with that response. Right after Caesarea Philippi, the crowds begin to shrink. They begin to shrink because Jesus was talking about suffering. Jesus was talking about the cost of discipleship. Jesus was saying things like, "If you're going to follow me, take up your cross and follow me." "If you want to follow after me, you've got to hate your father and mother and brother and sister and spouse and children and even your own life." "If you're going to follow me, you've got to renounce all that you have." And people would hear those words — and they'd hear words like "eat my flesh and drink my blood" — and say, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" And Jesus would say, "Are you going to turn away from me too?"

It was these same crowds who, when Jesus was in the temple in the last week of his life and the Pharisees were trying to trap him, got Jesus to answer the most controversial political question of the day: Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? And Jesus answers the question brilliantly. He exposes their hypocrisy, and he gives an answer no one really liked: Yes, you should pay your taxes, because Caesar is owed certain things — but you shall never give to Caesar what belongs to God alone. And it says that when people heard Jesus give that answer — same word — they were amazed. They were amazed, and what did they do? Go to the slide right before this. *They went away.*

*When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away. (Matthew 22:22)*

They were amazed, and they went away. So what's Matthew saying? He's saying **you can't just applaud the truth.**

And it is so tempting for modern people to stop right there. Even as a pastor, I think about our staff, and how I want our staff to work really hard to create environments in our church where people can encounter God. I don't want you to come to church just to learn. I don't want church to be boring but educational. I want you to encounter God. I want you to encounter God's presence. I want you to sense the working of the Holy Spirit. I want you to rejoice. I want you to scream. I want you to yell. I want you to cry. I want there to be an emotive response to Jesus, because he is amazing. Amen? He's incredible.

And it's not uncommon for even skeptical people to look at Jesus and his impact on people and say, "Man, that's impressive. I'm an atheist, but as I look at the social utility of Christianity, and the power of Jesus and these Christian churches to build hospitals and create community and a shared social fabric — it's really the glue that holds our culture together. This is a good thing. We should advocate for cultural Christianity." They're amazed.

But what do they do — what do *you* do — when Jesus begins to confront you? When he begins to say uncomfortable truths — not truths that are amazing and get you excited, but truths that are offensive and make you go, "I don't like that. I don't like that you're meddling in my business. I don't like that you're requiring me to sacrifice. I don't like that you're exposing this part of me that I'm insecure about"? That's where amazement is not sufficient. There's a difference between being amazed and actually agreeing with the truth — between being amazed and actually affirming it, acknowledging it, and applying it to your life so that it will save you and change you.

So **don't just applaud the truth**. That's the point. Applauding is not sufficient. If all we ever do in this church is give you an experience where you feel emotional and you respond — and on Sunday, "Man, that sermon was so good, it gives me all my feels, and I just want to love Jesus better" — and then on Wednesday you're back riding with the devil, we did it wrong. We failed you. That is not sufficient. That's not the response Jesus requires. It's not the response he wants us to give.

### 3. Don't attack the truth

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The Pharisees do something totally different. Unlike the crowd, they're not amazed — but they do agree with the facts. And so they say Jesus drives out demons, but he drives out demons by the ruler of demons. So the big point here is that sometimes **the truth of Jesus can create agreement**.

And I use the word *agreement* because they use the same Greek word Matthew uses. Matthew uses the word *ekballō*, which means "to cast out" or "to drive out," which is a supernatural act of deliverance. What I mean by that is that the Pharisees were not anti-supernatural. They were not even unwilling to acknowledge that Jesus did a miracle. They acknowledged the miracle. They acknowledged the implications. But then they would spin it and twist the facts so that it fit within their worldview.

Because if Jesus had that power, and Jesus came from God, that would mean *they* were in the wrong, because he had been accusing them. He had been accusing them of misreading the Scripture. He had been accusing the Pharisees of resisting God. He would later say, "You are sons of the devil." In other words, you're going to hell, and everyone following you is

going to hell: "You make him twice as much a child of hell as you are."<sup>4</sup> And they were not able to stomach that accusation. So they could affirm — and had to affirm — the facts as they saw them, but they could not fully embrace them. And so they rejected it and spun it, and they said, "The only reason he's able to do these things, which are supernatural and incredible, is because he's using supernatural power from the devil. These things are evil."

And it reminds me that **sometimes even demons can see the truth and agree that it is what it is**. I think about the demoniacs in Matthew chapter 8, just a few chapters earlier. These two demoniacs are the first people to say of Jesus that he's the Son of God. It really stood out as I was studying Matthew: it wasn't the disciples. It wasn't the friendlies. It was the enemies of God. It was the demons that say, "You're the Son of God."

*"What do you have to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"  
(Matthew 8:29)*

And you look at that and go, "Wow, their theology was sound." They understood Jesus was the Son of God. They understood that Jesus was the judge of the universe, that he was going to cast them into the lake of fire. And yet they were not aligned. They were not in right relationship with God. They were not in right relationship with Jesus. They were hostile to Jesus, even though they agreed about the facts. The book of James says:

*You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe — and they shudder. (James 2:19)*

The point is, **it's not enough to be in agreement with the facts about Jesus**. And this is really uncomfortable, I think, for us, because you can go to church your whole life. You can know every answer to the Sunday school questions. I grew up in church. There were Sundays when the Sunday school teacher would say something incorrect, and I'd think to myself, "That's incorrect." But I never said anything. And the next week that lady would come in and say, "Kids, I've got to make an apology. Last week I said ..." And I thought to myself, *I already knew it*. I was smarter than the teacher at least one time. But it doesn't matter. You can be smarter than the teacher. You can know all the Sunday school questions. You can serve in the church. You can be a teacher. You could be a deacon. You can tithe. You can advocate for righteousness. You can be politically engaged to bring about the kingdom of God. You can be cheered on and applauded and respected by your peers and be the senior pastor of Broadview Baptist Church — and you can still go to hell, even though you agreed with everything, because you weren't in alignment. Because **agreement and alignment are not the same thing**. The facts can create agreement, but they can't guarantee alignment.

The Pharisees were everything I just said. They knew the Bible. They went to church. They were disciplined. They were moral. They were well respected. They were cheered. They advanced righteousness. They were politically engaged. And Jesus says, "You're a son of the devil. You are going to hell, and you're leading every person who follows you straight to hell — because you agree, but you're not aligned." And that should unsettle us.

And the reason amazement and agreement are so dangerous is that **they give you a false sense of assurance**. When you're amazed by the truth, you have this assurance: *Surely I'm saved, because I have this feeling. I feel the way I'm supposed to feel about Jesus, so therefore I must be in right relationship*. And you can feel the way you're supposed to feel. But if there's no allegiance — if the will does not bend to the lordship of Jesus Christ — then that misalignment matters to the Lord.

And sometimes our knowledge can give us a false sense of assurance: "Well, I know all the Bible verses. I'm better educated — I've got a degree." That knowledge can give you a false sense of assurance. But what do you do when Jesus challenges your advancement in life? What do you do when he challenges your ambitions? "Well, Jesus, I want to marry this person. And I know I'm not honoring you with my sexuality, but it's just temporary. It's going to fade." Maybe you'd never say it out loud, but there's this assumption that because you know so much, and because you feel so much the right way, he's kind of cool — he's kind of okay with this spirit of rebellion — because the right feelings are there and the right knowledge is there, and so the rebellion doesn't matter as much.

And Matthew is saying, no, that's not the case. You can be amazed and not respond to the truth, and the truth not save you, redeem you, transform you as it's meant to do. You can have all the right answers. You can be smarter than everyone else, and yet the truth not save you and transform you like it's supposed to do.

So don't think that just because you're not a Pharisee, or because you're not in a crowd in the first century, you and I don't do the exact same things. **We do the exact same things for the exact same reasons**. As soon as Jesus doesn't affirm our assumptions, as soon as he starts to say and do things outside of our box, we get unsettled real fast. We are quick to turn. We are quick to shift our allegiances somewhere else. As soon as Jesus exposes us for the sinners we are, as soon as he requires a sacrifice that's going to slow down our ambitions, as soon as the truth of Jesus requires us to expose ourselves — to become insecure, to confess our sin, to repent — what do we do? **We attack the truth**.

Now, maybe we don't say what they said, which ended up getting Jesus killed. But we say things like, "Ah, he's probably just a moral teacher. He lived in the first century. They weren't scientific in the way they thought about the world." And we diminish and cheapen the truth that is in Jesus, and attack it, so that we don't have to accept it.

**Don't just applaud the truth. Certainly don't attack the truth.** You want to affirm it. You want to apply it.

#### 4. Acknowledge and affirm the truth

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The last point comes not from the crowds and not from the Pharisees. It comes from the people who were bringing the mute man.

I find it so fascinating that Matthew is obsessed with the responses people give and the words people speak — and yet in this passage, the one person whose word matters most is the one word you never hear. You never hear Jesus say a single thing. And we don't know what this mute guy said. Wouldn't it be funny if it was something like "Hello," something not significant? Or maybe he confessed Jesus as Lord. We don't know. Why doesn't Matthew tell us?

I think Matthew doesn't tell us because he wants to create tension. I think he wants us to be uncomfortable — hopefully like you're feeling right now. He wants us to be uncomfortable so that these two groups can be a mirror and force us to ask the question: *What's our verdict going to be?*

And the verdict we could give is the verdict these unnamed friends or helpers give in bringing the man to Jesus. This stood out to me this week as I was studying: in Matthew chapters 8 and 9 there are ten miracles, nine different encounters, and every single encounter save one has people bringing a need to Jesus or coming to Jesus with a need. Either someone brings a need on behalf of someone else, or they themselves come to Jesus. The only time Jesus responds proactively is the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law at Peter's house. He proactively heals her fever, and she serves him. In every other instance, the needs are brought.

And what that tells me is that it's not enough for you to have a need. **Jesus does not respond to needs that exist. Jesus responds to needs that are brought.** Jesus responds to people who acknowledge their need and his truth. In this case, they are acknowledging that Jesus has power — that Jesus is unique among all other men — and therefore, "We are going to bring this brother, who has been oppressed by evil, to Jesus, with the faith that he can heal him." So they're doing more than the crowds, and they're certainly doing more than the Pharisees. In their faith, through their faith, they are acknowledging that Jesus has power to save.

And that's what you and I need to do with truth. It's not enough to applaud it. It's certainly not enough to attack it. You want to acknowledge it and affirm it. **Truth must be acknowledged and affirmed.**

And I don't just use those words because they start with A — although that is handy, given my OCD. I use these words because in the Bible these English words are used to symbolize something very, very important. I think about Proverbs 3:5–6, where the author says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." That word that's translated "acknowledge" is the Hebrew word *yada*. It's translated "know" in the CSB and in many other places:

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5–6)*

The thing that makes that kind of knowledge, or acknowledgment, unique is that it's more than just intellectual assent. It goes beyond mere academic agreement and becomes something that requires relational submission — and in many cases, relational intimacy.

Another example is in Psalm 32. The author of the psalm is confessing his sin, and he says, "I acknowledged my sin to you" (Psalm 32:5), which is his way of saying, *I agree with you, God. You're holy. I'm sinful. This is bad. I acknowledge it.* In other words, it's going to change what I do. It's going to change my response.

You see it used again of Pharaoh, where God says, "I'm going to do this and that, and then Pharaoh will acknowledge that I am the Lord" (see Exodus 7:17). In other words, it's more than just intellectual. It's volitional. It changes what he's going to do. He's going to let my people go, because he's going to acknowledge it.

So acknowledgment is not just intellectual assent. That's what I want you to see. **It changes the way you live.** It forces you into a posture of submission, a posture of humility, a posture of acceptance. And you say of God that what he is is good, that what he says is true, and therefore I'm going to apply it. That is where we have to get if we're going to allow the truth of Jesus to actually change our lives. Because Satan can agree with the truth. The crowds can be amazed by the truth. But **amazement and agreement are different from allegiance.** They're different from acknowledging truth and submitting to it. And that's what these men demonstrate in bringing their brother to Jesus.

You want to acknowledge and affirm. The word *confess* means "to say the same thing as."<sup>5</sup> You want to say of Jesus exactly what the Father in heaven says of Jesus: that he is the Son of God, and he is the Savior of the world.

## Jesus finally speaks

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Now, I said that Jesus is unusually silent. What's interesting is that if you keep reading in Matthew, he finally does speak. There's a miracle in Matthew 12 that is an echo of our miracle today. I want to show it to you, and then we're going to end. Matthew 12, verse 22. Matthew re-presents this miracle. He re-presents both responses, from the crowd and from the Pharisees — and then Jesus actually speaks. So I think Matthew wants us to hold these two in tension.

*Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to him. He healed him, so that the man could both speak and see. (Matthew 12:22)*

Notice he combines the visual element and the speaking element.

*All the crowds were astounded ... (Matthew 12:23)*

Same response. It's the same Greek word — amazed.<sup>6</sup>

*... and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" (Matthew 12:23)*

And they conjecture: "Could this be the Son of David?" Not submission, not allegiance, but "Could this be?" Conjecture. Speculation. Then the Pharisees heard this, and what did they do? Same thing, same response:

*When the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man drives out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." (Matthew 12:24)*

And then Jesus finally gives his thoughts. I'm not going to read all of them, but basically Jesus says, "You guys are idiots. You're not thinking clearly. A house divided against itself cannot stand. If I'm casting out demons by demons — well, first off, who are your people casting them out by? And that's not even how it works. A house divided against itself cannot stand. The reason I'm casting out demons is because I went into Satan's house and I tied him up. And because he's tied up, he can't do anything about what I'm doing — overturning the kingdom of darkness and casting out demons. I've tied up the strong man. That's why I'm doing what I'm doing. And for you to say what you just said is not good" (Matthew 12:25–29).

And he condemns them for their unbelief with a teaching we know today as the unpardonable sin. Maybe you've heard this before: the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says in verse 30:

*"Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me scatters."  
(Matthew 12:30)*

In other words, Jesus is saying, **"I am a truth you cannot avoid.** You will give a verdict, and your verdict matters. You will either be with me or you will be against me, but you cannot ride the fence." And then he says:

*"Therefore, I tell you, people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the one to come." (Matthew 12:31–32)*

Now, I know that's a can of worms, and we're at the end of the sermon, and what are you going to do with that — and am I really saved? I honestly have never understood all the confusion around this passage. If you look at it in context, Jesus is clearly saying to the Pharisees, *You cannot be saved.* And the reason you cannot be saved is that you are looking at what God is doing and saying it is satanic. You are looking at what is good and calling it evil. You are looking at the source of salvation and saying it is leading people astray.

It would be like if you were drowning, and someone, because they love you, threw you a lifeline — a floaty, a good floaty, a big, big floaty — and you looked at that big floaty that could save your life and said, "Why would you throw an anchor down here? This anchor is going to send me to the bottom of the depths. This anchor is going to end my life. I will never grab that anchor." And Jesus would say to you, "You idiot."

It's not that God does not have mercy. It's not that he is not eager to save. He has abundant mercy. **Every sin is forgiven except the sin that says of good that it is evil** — the sin that says of what is life that it is death. And not because God doesn't want to save, not because he has no mercy to save, but because of your unbelief — because you are unwilling to reach out and receive the truth that is obviously right in front of you.

And we do the same thing. Now, you may not blaspheme the Holy Spirit. But how many of us look at the truth of Jesus, and when it gets inconvenient, or when it exposes things about us we're not ready to accept — namely, that I'm drowning and I can't save myself — we get real uncomfortable with acknowledging it and affirming it?

**You can't just applaud the truth. You can't attack it. You've got to apply it.** And by apply it, I mean you've got to actually change the way you live in response to the truth. If Jesus truly is the Son of God, if God truly did raise him from the dead, then the claims he made about himself are true, and they are claims you can't just respond to with "Hey, that's cool" or "Hey, that's interesting." If he really is the Son of God, then he demands your

allegiance. He demands loyalty that you wouldn't even give to your mom or dad. He demands humility. He demands submission. He demands repentance. He demands obedience. And until and unless we're ready to give him that, you can applaud all you want, and you can attack it from every angle, but at the end of the day those things will prove to be deficient. **The only thing that will matter is whether you applied it — whether you received that truth into your life.**

And Jesus is himself a model of what this looks like, because Jesus applied the truth even when it was hard. Jesus was obedient to the Father even though it cost him his very own life — a tortured death by crucifixion at the hands of the Romans. And he didn't even defend himself. That's what's so amazing. Pilate was amazed, because — as Isaiah said — like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not open his mouth (Isaiah 53:7). Jesus did not defend himself. He did not say, "You're making a mistake." **He let the Father defend him with a glorious resurrection.** And your heavenly Father will defend his truth in the same way, because that's what truth always does. It's vindicated. It's vindicated over evil. It's vindicated over death.

And the reality of truth in the Christian gospel is that it's not just an idea. It's not just a realm. **It's a person.** It's a living person who died for sinners — and he died for you, and he died for me, on the cross. And that salvation and forgiveness is available to everyone, if you would respond and receive it into your life. So if you've never done that, I would encourage you to do so.

## Invitation and the Lord's Supper

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We're going to take the Lord's Supper this morning, which is an invitation for us to do that at various levels. If you're a Christian this morning, as we take the Lord's Supper, we're encouraged to examine our hearts and to take the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. So if there's repentance that needs to take place this morning — because of your rejection of the truth, or because you've cheered it but haven't responded to it with your allegiance and obedience — then maybe this morning you would repent of that sin and take the Lord's Supper in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

You may not be a Christian, and this morning the Holy Spirit is drawing you to faith. I would encourage you to fill out your connect card and let us know, so that we can follow up with you and help you take that next step of obedience.

But I'm going to ask our ushers to come down here to the front, and we're going to respond by taking the Lord's Supper, and you can respond there where you're seated, however the Lord leads. The altar is open if you want to come and ...

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "John chapter 6"; the healing of the man born blind, with the question "Who sinned, this man or his parents?", is John 9:1–3. Source: John 9:1–3 (CSB), BibleGateway. [↵](#)
  2. Transcript note: the captions read the reference as "35:6"; the "Here is your God ... he will save you" line is Isaiah 35:4, and the healing signs follow in verses 5–6. Source: Isaiah 35:4–6 (CSB), BibleGateway. [↵](#)
  3. Transcript note: spoken as "wrote to Jesus from prison"; Matthew says John "sent a message through his disciples." Source: Matthew 11:2–3 (CSB), BibleGateway. [↵](#)
  4. Transcript note: spoken as "You make those who follow you twice a son of the devil as you are"; Matthew 23:15 reads "you make him twice as much a child of hell as you are" (Greek *huion geennēs*, "son of Gehenna"). The "your father the devil" language is John 8:44. Source: Matthew 23:15 (CSB), BibleGateway. [↵](#)
  5. Transcript note: spoken as "The English word confess means to say the same thing as"; the "say the same thing" sense belongs to the New Testament Greek word *homologeō* (*homo-* "same" + *legō* "say"). English *confess* comes from Latin *confiteri*, "to acknowledge." Source: Online Etymology Dictionary, "confess." [↵](#)
  6. Transcript note: Matthew 12:23 uses a different Greek verb (*existēmi*, "astounded") from the *thaumazō* ("amazed") of Matthew 9:33, though the two are close in meaning, and the crowd's response is the same. Source: Bible Hub interlinear, Matthew 9:33 and 12:23. [↵](#)