

Never Before, Never Again

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 August 2025

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] My name is Sean, for those of you who know me, and I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. It's my joy and privilege to preach God's word to you this morning. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 9.

Matthew chapter 9 verses 27 to 34. We normally stand for the reading of God's word, but I'm just going to have you guys sit today.

I will read for us Matthew chapter 9 verses 27 to 34. Let me pray.

Father, open up your word to us. That we might see the glory, the authority, the compassion, and mercy of Jesus Christ our Savior.

And through him that we might be reconciled to you, to love you, to worship you forever. Speak to us in your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[1 : 34] I'm going to read it out loud for us. Matthew chapter 9 verses 27 to 34. And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, Have mercy on us, son of David.

When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to him, Yes, Lord.

Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it done to you. And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, See that no one knows about it.

But they went away and spread his fame through all that district. As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him.

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. But the Pharisees said, He casts out demons by the prince of demons.

[2 : 41] This is God's holy and authoritative word. When it comes to Christianity, many people have qualms and questions about this doctrine or that, this ethical requirement or that.

But the central question of Christianity is, Who is Jesus? Because if Jesus is who he said he is, if he really is the Messiah whom God has sent, if he really is the Son of God, if he really is the atoning sacrifice, the Lamb of God, and if really Christianity is not a man-made religion, but the truth of God, then we are in no position to quibble about this or that.

We must believe in Jesus and follow him, or else be found to be resisting God himself. After Jesus finished his first magisterial sermon, the Sermon on the Mount that we went through recently in Matthew chapters 5 to 7, he said in chapter 7, 28 to 29, The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

And then Matthew has been spending the next subsequent two chapters, chapters 8 and 9, to demonstrate to us that authority that Jesus had by recounting nine miracle stories in three groups of three.

To show us the kind and the extent of authority that Jesus had over diseases, over natural disasters, over demons, and even over death itself. And we're at the very end of that section of Matthew, looking at the last two miracles that Jesus did in this section.

[4 : 24] Matthew's aim in retelling these stories is this, to show us that there is no one like Jesus, and we must believe in him. We're going to first talk about, it's a very simple message and a short message to accommodate our setting here.

My two points are that just who Jesus is, and what we must do. That's going to be my outline for the morning. Let's first look at who Jesus is. Having just raised a ruler's daughter from the dead in the preceding passage, Jesus is now moving to a new location, when it says in verse 27, two blind men start following Jesus.

They're crying aloud, have mercy on us, son of David. But Jesus doesn't heal the blind men right then and there in public, on the road. No, he says in verse 28, that when he entered the house, then the blind men came to him, and Jesus then starts interacting with them.

We are not told whose house this is. There are times when Matthew specifies whose house Jesus was in. For example, we are told that Jesus entered Peter's house, in chapter 8, verse 14, that he was in the ruler's house in chapter 9, verse 23, and then he was in the house of Simon the leper in chapter 26, verse 6.

But there are also several times in the gospel when we are told without any additional detail that he just simply entered the house. In such cases, it seems most likely that Matthew is referring to Jesus' family home, his parents' house in Capernaum.

[5 : 52] It's only after entering his house that Jesus addresses the blind men. Do you believe that I am able to do this? And they reply, Yes, Lord, in verse 28.

It's easy to gloss over this, but this is quite the profession of faith. These blind men believe that Jesus can give them sight. Think of the people in your life that you have the greatest confidence and trust in.

You trust them to get anything that you ask them to do done. They're very reliable, dependable people. You ask them for big things sometimes.

You ask them to do things for planning your wedding. But imagine, would you trust them to open the eyes of the blind? You wouldn't. That would be a misplaced confidence.

Because even with all the advances in modern medicine, most forms of blindness have no cure. Yet these two blind men reply in the affirmative, Yes, Lord. Yes, we believe that you can make us see.

[6 : 56] And it says in verses 29 to 30 that Jesus touched their eyes and said, According to your faith be it done to you. And their eyes were opened. A simple touch, a simple word. And the two men who once were blind, now see.

And that's meant to raise the question in our minds, what kind of man is this? Who is Jesus? How does he have such authority? And then we get to the last miracle story of this section.

As Jesus and his disciples are leaving, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. Even though it's translated here as demon-oppressed, here as opposed to demon-possessed, as we saw in chapter 8, verse 28, the Greek word behind the two expressions are exactly the same.

It means literally that they were demonized, meaning that they were under some kind of controlling influence of the demon. Demon has taken residence within this man.

In the case of the gathering demoniacs in chapter 8 that we saw, the demon spoke through the man that they inhabited. But in this case, the demon makes the man mute, which shows us that the demons, the different kinds of demons who have different effects on their hosts.

[8 : 09] But Jesus' reaction in both cases is the same. It says in verse 23 that the demon had been cast out. Matthew is not at all interested in capturing the drama or the mechanics of exorcisms.

He doesn't give us any detail about how it went down. He simply tells us that the demon was cast out by Jesus. He who has authority over demons can cast out demons.

It's as simple as that. And that's Matthew's point. And Matthew's point is that Jesus has that authority, not only over the visible created world, the diseases, the natural disasters, and death, but also over the invisible created world, the realm of spirits, angels, and demons.

The crowds understandably marvel in verse 33, and they say, never was anything like this seen in Israel. This is a remarkable statement for these Jews to make because there have been other exorcists in the history of Israel.

In 1 Samuel 16, verse 23, when an evil spirit came upon King Saul and tormented him, David played the harp, and the spirit departed from him. But in that situation, the evil spirit always returned time and time again to torment Saul.

[9 : 34] The exorcism was not permanent in that situation. But Jesus casts out demons once and for all with the word of his mouth. That's the difference.

There were also Old Testament prophets who raised the dead. You might recall Elijah, who raised the dead son of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17, but that was not an easy affair.

It was quite an involved affair. He had to earnestly cry out to God in prayer, and then he had to lay himself out on top of the child three times before the child began consciousness and came back to life.

Similarly, Elijah in 2 Kings 4, when he raised the Shunammite's son, he also had to put his staff on the child for a bit, which didn't work, and then he had to come and pray earnestly and lay himself out for probably maximal physical context and spiritual healing power.

And that had to happen multiple times before the child regained life. But Jesus, when he raised the ruler's daughter in chapter 9, verse 25, simply took her by the hand, and the girl arose.

[10 : 45] Moreover, as Todd preached on a couple weeks ago, what manner of man ever claimed to forgive sins? Jesus did that to the paralytic in chapter 9, verse 2.

And the Pharisees were understandably upset, and they objected to Jesus' claim, and they murmured among themselves, this man is blaspheming, for who can forgive sins but God alone?

But Jesus claimed that unique divine authority for himself, and Jesus possessed that authority in himself. So the crowds marveled, saying, never was anything like this seen in Israel.

Never before was there anyone like Jesus. And never again will there be someone like Jesus. Who then is this man? How does he have such authority?

We're given several important hints in this passage. And first, is that Jesus is addressed by the two blind men in this story, in verse 27, as the son of David.

[11 : 46] Jesus was introduced to us with this title at the very beginning of Matthew's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 1, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David. David was the great king of Israel, to whom God had made this promise, in 2 Samuel 7, 12-14.

I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.

This prophecy was fulfilled in an immediate sense by King Solomon, who reigned after his father David, and built the temple of the Lord. But Solomon did not fulfill this prophecy in an ultimate sense, because the Davidic dynasty, along with the temple, came crumbling down at the Babylonian exile.

But nonetheless, in Jeremiah 23, verses 14-17, God renewed his promise of a Davidic king, the Messiah, to his exiled people in Babylon.

And he said, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time, I will cause a righteous branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

[13 : 03] In those days, Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called, The Lord is our righteousness. For thus says the Lord, David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel.

That ancient promise is finally being fulfilled in Jesus the Christ, which means the anointed one, the prophesied king, the messianic king. And that's what it means that he is the son of David.

The second clue is that Jesus is also addressed by the blind men in verse 28 as Lord. Skeptics of scripture are quick to point out that the word Lord in Greek can simply mean sir.

It could simply mean a polite differential term in the same way people in the south call everybody that's every male that occupies a higher social station than them sir. And they explain that that's just what it means here.

It just means sir. However, that doesn't go deep enough in its interpretation. Between Matthew chapters 1 to 6, only God is ever called Lord in all six of those early chapters.

[14 : 12] About 10 times. The first time that that word is applied to anyone other than God is in chapter 7, verse 21 to 23. When Jesus says, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

But the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name and then I will declare to them, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. So the first time that this title, Lord, is applied to anyone other than God, first time that Jesus applies this title to himself, he claims to be the cosmic end time judge and ruler of the universe.

So once again, appropriating divine prerogatives for himself as he has done throughout the gospel. This is intentional. In Matthew chapter 3, verse 3, Matthew quotes Isaiah 40, verse 3, and says that John the Baptist is the one who fulfills the prophecy that someone would come who would prepare the way of the Lord.

In the original context of Isaiah, that Lord is Lord in all caps. It's Yahweh. It's referring to God. And yet, when you read on in Matthew chapter 3, he tells us that John the Baptist is preparing the way for Jesus.

[15 : 34] So again, Jesus is being equated to claiming divine lordship. Because Jesus is God. Because as he was, as God the Father declared at his baptism in Matthew chapter 3, he is the beloved son of God.

He raises the dead and casts out demons and forgives sin with the word of his mouth because he is God. It's no coincidence that the last two miracles of this section are of Jesus opening the eyes of the blind and opening the mouth of the mute because those two are signature miracles that only God can do and are characterized and are associated with the messianic age.

In Exodus 4, 11, God says, who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?

These are divine prerogatives that Jesus has assumed for himself. As we read also from our call to worship in Isaiah 35, he prophesied of a day when God himself would come and save his people.

And on that day, he said, the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. This is why these are the signs and these are the representations of the messianic age and that's why Matthew mentions and singles these miracles out of a sea of miracles that he could have used.

[17:06] He's saying the Messiah is here. Jesus is God in the flesh. But there is still one more way that Jesus is unlike any other ruler or deliverer that has ever lived.

I noted earlier that Jesus does not heal the two blind men in public. He waits for a more private setting. In verses 30 to 31, we see why Jesus waited until he was inside the house.

He says, Jesus sternly warned them, see that no one knows about it. Jesus is not telling them to keep the fact that they were healed of their blindness secret.

If you think about that for one minute, you realize that that would be an impossible request. How do two blind men who used to not be able to see but now can see hide that fact from anyone around them?

That's impossible to hide unless they pretend that they're blind for the rest of their lives. That's not what Jesus is talking about. He's telling them to hide, keep his identity concealed.

[18:08] They know who he is, the son of David, the Christ, the Messiah, the Lord, and he's telling them to not make that known. The common standard Bible, the Christian standard Bible, CSB translates it this way.

Instead of saying nothing to anyone, it says, make sure no one finds out. He doesn't want them to find out who he is.

That's why in verse 31, when they don't listen to him and they go out and telling people what happened, it says that they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

That's what Jesus was concerned about. His identity being revealed, his fame spreading among the crowds. This secrecy, it fits the pattern of Jesus' ministry.

Earlier in chapter 9, verse 25, when Jesus was raising the ruler's daughter from the dead, he first made sure that the crowd had been put outside of the house before he did the miracle. Later in 12, 16, after healing many of those who followed Jesus, he ordered them not to make him known.

[19:20] In Matthew 16, 19-21, after Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples, tell no one, he strictly charges the disciples to tell no one that he is the Christ.

And then finally in chapter 17, verse 9, after temporarily revealing his divine glory at the transfiguration, Jesus tells his disciples, tell no one the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

But why does Jesus hide the fact that he is the Messiah, the Christ? Why does he not reveal his full glory and power to everyone for all to see? Because Jesus is not interested in stirring up people's misguided zeal, messianic fervor.

He is not interested in instigating a revolution and overthrowing Caesar. His goal wasn't to amass as many supporters and followers as he could because he wasn't trying to consolidate influence and power to make himself untouchable, which is what earthly rulers tried to do.

Instead, Jesus knew that his destiny was to suffer and die on the cross for the sins of many as the sacrificial Lamb of God.

[20 : 38] Jesus could have overthrown Caesar if he wanted to. Could the man who opened the eyes of the blind instead strike people blind?

Of course he could. Could the man who stopped and calmed a furious storm with the word of his mouth make a storm erupt to overtake the strongholds of his enemies?

Of course he could do that. Could the man who raised someone from the dead also strike someone dead? He is the Lord of life and of all creation.

Of course he could do that. In Matthew 26, 53, Jesus tells his disciples explicitly that if he wanted to, he could appeal to his heavenly father and he would at once send more than 12 legions of angels to protect him and fight for him.

But why doesn't Jesus do that? The Pharisees here detract from Jesus and slander Jesus in verse 34. He casts out demons by the prince of demons.

[21 : 43] But Jesus does nothing to retaliate. He doesn't even defend himself against their false argument until later in chapter 12. Jesus minds his own business and continues to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God because that is what he came to do.

Jesus is a man like no other and he saves us in a manner like no other. Jesus state his mission very clearly two passages ago that Todd preached on in chapter 9 verse 12 to 13.

Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice for I came not to call the righteous but sinners.

the two blind men said to Jesus in verse 27 have mercy on us son of David and that's exactly what Jesus did. If that is who Jesus is and what he came to do then how should we respond?

What must we do? unless I missed something I don't think anyone here is physically blind but even if you and I are not physically blind all of us are spiritually blind by default later in chapters 15 and 23 Jesus repeatedly rebukes the Jewish leaders of his day for being spiritually blind he says in Matthew 15 14 let them alone they are blind guides and if the blind lead the blind both will fall into a pit that is the unfortunate condition of every man and every woman apart from Jesus Christ 2nd Corinthians 4 4 says that the God of this world namely Satan the prince of demons the sinful world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God not all of us have blindness of the eyes but all of us do have by default apart from

[23 : 49] Christ blindness of the mind so what then must we do we must take our cue from the two blind men who cry out to Jesus for mercy have mercy on us son of David mercy is not a wage or an award that we earn it's rather a pardon for guilty sinners it's favor for the undeserving we cannot attain spiritual sight or some kind of spiritual enlightenment by meditating for long enough or piling up enough merit or good deeds no spiritual sight is given as a gift by Jesus to those who humble themselves those who admit that they are sinners and acknowledge their need for mercy that's why if you're that person that that God spoke to through Lauren's prophecy earlier and you feel that your sins are too great that you cannot possibly be saved or you cannot possibly be loved actually you are exactly the kind of person who can receive the mercy of God because you're humbling yourself and acknowledging your need for mercy because mercy is not merit it is given to the undeserving it is pardoned for guilty sinners the biblical term for this humbling of yourself to receive

God's mercy is faith believing in Jesus Jesus asked in verse 28 do you believe that I am able to do this and it's only when the blind men reply yes Lord Jesus says according to your faith let it be done to you faith as a prerequisite for healing is attested in numerous places in scripture later in chapter 13 of Matthew it says that Jesus did not do many mighty works in that place because of their unbelief faith precedes these mighty works works of healing we often want God to work on our terms but the proper posture is to surrender to God and submit ourselves to him and work and live according to his terms belief precedes healing and just as faith is a prerequisite for the healing of physical blindness so it is a prerequisite for the healing of spiritual blindness non-Christians often say

I will believe in Jesus when I can see the spiritual realities that you speak of it's the materialist objection I will only believe what I can see with my physical eyes however the spiritual reality is precisely the opposite we must first believe in order to see the blind men believe Jesus first then they are healed in accordance with their faith Augustine a fourth century theologian and pastor put it this way faith is to believe what you do not see the reward of this faith is to see what you believe Anselm an 11th century Christian pastor puts it similarly let me seek you he's talking to God praying to God let me seek you in desiring you let me desire you in seeking you let me find you in loving you let me love you in finding you for I do not seek to understand so that I may believe but I believe so that I may understand I often take my three girls out to swim during the summer we're just out yesterday at the

Cambridge public pool and my youngest is just learning how to float and no matter how many times I assure her trust me if you just stretch out and let yourself go I keep my hand under you and you will float everyone floats the water will hold you she it took her maybe two years to believe me and she is finally starting to let herself go no matter how many times I tell her that that's the case it's not until she actually lets go that she begins to know that she can float!

that the water can support her weight she's finally beginning to understand the freedom of floating believe what you do not see and you will see what you believe do you believe that Jesus is Lord do you believe that he is the son of God do you believe that Jesus is able to save you do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and was raised from the dead on the third day all those who say yes to that question can sing and testify unreservedly what we sang earlier this morning amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me I once was lost but now I'm found I was blind but now I see let's pray together yes father that is a true statement we were all once blind but in your mercy you have opened our eyes to see your truth your love your salvation and God for that you deserve all the glory make us

[29 : 36] Lord glad recipients of your mercy and if there's anyone here who has not yet surrendered to that mercy help them open their blind eyes help them to let go entrust themselves to Jesus Christ our Lord our only Savior in his precious name we pray amen amen amen!

Thank you.