

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: The Response Of The Crowd, And The Command Of Jesus

Text: Matthew 9:32-35

INTRODUCTION: A British writer commented, “The problem with humanity is this: humanity stands at the crossroads and all the signposts have fallen down.” The problem with humanity isn’t with the signposts, but ignoring the signposts God has put up, cf. Romans 1:18-23.

SERMON PROPOSITION: To see the two responses of the crowd to Jesus and His works. There are as always, two responses.

Think about all the signposts that Jesus did to point to His Messiahship. Even before the string of miracles in chapters 8-9, we see this in Matthew 4:23, “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.” The signposts for all to see begin in chapter 8, the healing of a leper, a centurion’s daughter healed, Peter’s mother-in-law and many others healed, the casting out of demons, a paralytic healed, a twelve year old girl raised from the dead, a woman who hemorrhaged blood for twelve years healed, and two blind men can now see.

Jesus is the dividing line of men. You are either for Him or against Him. When Jesus was presented at the temple for circumcision, Simeon who had been promised, “And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:26). When he saw Jesus he said, “And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed, and a sword will pierce even your own soul, to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:34-35). The “fall” are those who reject Christ, and the “rise” are those who believe.

The Psalmist describes the two in these terms, “He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away” (Psalms 1:3-4). Jesus warned also of the correct foundation to build upon, cf. Matthew 7:24-27. There are only two types of people in the world, believers and unbelievers.

THE RESPONSES OF THE PEOPLE (THE CROWD)

First we have the response of the multitudes. The word for “amazed” is “thaumazō” and literally means “to marvel or wonder at.” The disciples were “amazed” when Jesus calmed the storm, but their amazement or wonder and afraid of the divine power more than the storm itself, “The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matthew 8:27). Luke 9:43, “And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.”

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APPLICATION: shouldn't we all be amazed at what God does. He administers grace to those who don't deserve it. If you ever lose sight of the mercy, long-suffering and compassion of God, you've become blind.

It's important to note just because the crowds were amazed, they didn't all believe. Great crowds followed Jesus, and walked many long, hot miles with Him. However, they did so at a distance. Many were astonished and even afraid, but never committed. Very simply, they were curious onlookers. John 6:26 defines this great truth, "Jesus answered them and said, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.”** They were simply following Him for the temporal benefits. Thus, the hallmark of the prosperity gospel movement and the seeker friendly movement. I'll follow as long as I am getting what I need.

I am sure some of those amazed did believe. But the truth of Scripture points to the vast majority of people who love a Jesus that affirms what they want. And when that affirmation isn't there, when sin is exposed and lifestyle are in a contradiction of Scripture, Jesus is tossed to the side. Many have made statements about Jesus that are good, uplifting and acknowledging, but never truly follow Him. The fact remains as long as the preaching of the Bible remains in "general terms" i.e. love, goodness, it's fine, but start speaking the truth about sin, and you lose the crowd. The many who praised Him became His critics, and those who once marveled Him became His enemies.

THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE (THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS)

There is no doubt the Pharisees were in the crowds at every miracle, every healing and seeing and watching what He was doing. They simply could not deny it. He was a threat to their traditional Judaism, of whom they were the chief custodians. So, they make up some story about Him being an agent of satan. Jesus addressed their accusations, which they did again, in Matthew 12:24, **"This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."** Beelzebul was a form of Beelzebub, which means "lord of the flies" and was the prince of demons according a pagan philistine deity. Jesus answered their foolish accusation with logic, **"Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?"** (Matthew 12:25-26). The foolishness of the Pharisees statement doesn't meet the truth test.

Here is the uncomfortable truth about truth, it can only be denounced with falsehood. The Pharisees were determined not to believe. No fact or reason, nor obvious miracles, raising of the dead would alter their belief. Men love darkness more than light. 2 Corinthians 4:4, **"In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."** Many sit in the pews each Sunday, and see the work of God, but do not believe. They have their own truth. They have their own idea of God.

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THE REBELLION DOESN'T STOP THE TRUTH

The two things Jesus did, he taught in the synagogues, and He proclaimed the gospel wherever He could. The word for teaching means “to give instruction”, and the word for “proclaim” means “to preach, herald.”

First, Jesus was teaching in the synagogues, which served as a place of worship, a town hall and a courthouse. There would be some reading from the first five books of the Bible, a translation and exposition from one of the prophets. As far back as Nehemiah, the exposition of God’s word is the most faithful way to teach. There was a policy called “freedom of the synagogue” which meant the exposition of the Scriptures could be given by any qualified man of the congregation. Often a visiting rabbi or dignitary was given the privilege. Both Jesus and Paul took advantage of this. In Acts 9:20, “*And immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, He is the Son of God.*” Acts 13:20, “*When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.*”

APPLICATION: the church today is the place for discipling. The church today is the place for teaching the word of God. And the best way to do that is reading, explaining and applying the text.

Second, Jesus went proclaiming “preaching” the gospel. Wherever Jesus went, a street corner, seaside, or along the way, He was preaching the gospel. This wasn’t a teaching, expositional format, He was telling of the good news, the gospel. He was teaching about a spiritual kingdom into which a man is born into by being forgiven, repenting and believing in Him. The dual task of teaching and proclaiming are still in force today. We must first teach men the truth of God’s word, cf. Matthew 28:19-20.

Third, Jesus was healing every kind of disease and sickness. B.B. Warfield wrote, “When our Lord came down to earth, He drew heaven with Him.” The ministry of Jesus consisted of teaching, preaching and healing. It was all meant to point out He was the Messiah and Savior.

CONCLUSION: Some may be “amazed” at God’s work, but until you repent, you aren’t a true follower of Christ. You will respond in one of two ways. There is not third option. Today, you may be following Christ because of the benefits you have. What happens when those stop?