Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgement people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

**Theme:** Encountering Jesus results in a stark division and has an impact on our speech

**Purpose then:** Demonstrating the gravity of the position taken and spoken by the Pharisees

**Call now:** To respond in faithfulness rather than rejection and have our speech transformed

***Title: The King who causes (demands?) a response***

* Setting the scene
  + Picture of Israelite who has heard about Jesus
    - Recap of gospel of Matthew
      * (suggest listen to sermons on all of this online)
      * Pick a few notable miracles
      * Mention other things you may have heard about
    - Now set immediate context
      * Tell story of what you see in the passage
* ***Big question: how will you respond?***
  + At first you recognise something amazing
    - Explain “Son of David”
  + Here rumblings from leaders you thought you respected
    - Explain “Beelzebub”
    - Maybe you join in
    - Threat to myself
* ***Repeat big question: how will you respond?***
  + Question that we’ve seen throughout the gospel of Matthew
    - Following the same story as the Israelite we imagined
  + Question he asks to each of us as we read the account of Jesus life today
  + ***How will we – you and I – respond?***
  + *Examples of trying to be neutral when it is not possible*
    - *Sports illustrations*
    - *Sticking with the status quo is implicitly making a decision against a new idea*
* Jesus answers the accusations of the Pharisees
  + Same accusations are made against Jesus today – attempt defamation because there are no legitimate objections
    - And against Christians today (quote earlier passages)
  + House divided – your heart divided? (related to two ways to respond)
    - *Examples of division*
* **Come to Jesus without fear**
  + *Every* sin and blasphemy against the son of man will be forgiven
    - *‘sin boldly’*
  + Sin against the holy spirit – I can’t explain, maybe no one will. Can tell you what it is not!
    - Take confidence!
* **Our response will be evidenced by what we say**
  + *Examples of fruit from tree*
  + Jesus is strongly polemical
  + Our words are important!
    - Proverbs
  + Romans 10:8-10

**Introduction**

Well, it’s a real privilege to have been given the opportunity to come and share God’s word with you this morning, so thank you for that. For those visiting and who I haven’t met yet, my name’s Nathanael, I’m a member of the church here at Emmanuel. If you’re a regular with us here at Emmanuel you’ll know that we’ve been going through Matthew as a church for a few months now – of course you can find all those previous sermons online. We had a little break since before Christmas, since then we’ve had a new year, new venue, new preacher (at least for this morning) but today we’re picking up Matthew again with the passage ***[name]*** read for us just now. If you have a bible you’ll you’ll find it useful to have that open in front of you as we look at it.

But before going any further, let me just pray for our time together now ***[pray]***.

* ***Hook?***

Tell Story

Imagine, for a moment, that you are an ordinary person in Israel, in the time of Jesus. You’re in Roman-occupied Northern-Judea. You’ve been brought up learning to manage the household; or perhaps you’ve learnt your father’s trade: as a fisherman, a craftsman, a farmer. And you’ve been brought up in the Jewish tradition, taught the scriptures and heard them recited regularly, celebrated the festivals – the Passover, the festival of weeks, the festival of booths. The religious leaders of the day have taught you the laws graciously given by God to his people, and you’ve heard read the prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Micah, and many the others. ***[TODO: been taught about son of David]***. Each day you go about your business, plying your trade, raising children, staying out the way of the Romans and your life seems normal. Each Saturday you keep the Sabbath and rest form your work, just as God himself rested on the seventh day. This is the way life is for you. And not just for you, but for thousands similar to you across Israel.

But soon you start to hear rumblings of something happening in the country. First it’s stories of a new prophet who goes by the name of John. He’s burst onto the scene, preaching a message of repentance and returning to God, calling the religious leaders, the Pharisees, who you’ve always thought everyone naturally respected because of their spirituality, calling them a brood of vipers, and saying that there is one coming soon who will come with the spirit of God and with fire. You’re told that people are listening to this prophet, following him, being baptised – it seems like something big is starting to happen.

But soon you start hearing stories of another man. A man called Jesus, a man from northern Israel just like you. But the stories you hear are incredible – the stories claim he’s who is doing and saying amazing, impossible things. You have no idea what true and what’s just rumour, but these stories keep coming. Each time it’s new people encountering Jesus in new places, with new miracles. There are stories of people with leprosy – people unclean according to Jewish law – being completely healed. You hear of a roman centurion’s servant being healed, of a storm being calmed and of demons being cast out of people. There’s even a story of some people making a hole in the roof of a packed house so they could get their disabled friend to Jesus for him to heal.

And along with this story you hear of Jesus claiming power beyond even this world. He claimed to be able to forgive the sins of this disabled man, and proved it by healing him. People say that when Jesus teaches it’s not like when the Pharisees or the scribes teach, because he speaks like he has authority of his own, authority even from God himself. His teachings are all based on the law and the prophets which you were taught growing up, yet his messages are different to the ‘be good enough’ message you’ve always heard, and he seems to think that when the prophets write, they’re talking about him.

More recently the stories of what he said have become more and more confusing. He’s called terrible judgement on the town of Capernaum – not far from where you live. He’s even claimed that whoever sees him, sees God. As these keep coming, you’re left to conclude that either this guy Jesus is utterly mad, or there is something incredibly special happening in Israel.

And then you hear that Jesus is in the next town. This man you’ve heard so much about. This man who apparently does and says such amazing things. So you pack up your belongings ready for a journey, you knock on your neighbour’s door, you walk to the next town, and you make your way to the synagogue.

As you arrive there’s already a crowd gathered there, as apparently there is wherever Jesus goes. The crowd is made up mostly of regular Israelites like yourself – fishermen, farmers, stone masons, tanners. To one side you do see a group of Pharisees – these men you’ve always thought worthy of respect because of their knowledge and piety.

At the front are a few men – form their accents it’s clear they’re from the area, but it’s not clear which one is Jesus.

**Section 1: When Jesus Acts it is Divisive**

*Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”*

* Tell story
* Make tension clear: the acts Jesus does are undeniable and offensive to those who reject them.
  + Question is how are you going to respond? Jesus acts are divisive.

**Section 2: When Jesus Speaks it is Incisive**

*Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.*

* Doesn’t end there – Jesus speaks into the responses
  + His answers are *incisive.*
* Addresses the objections of the Pharisees
  + House divided: principle that is clear wherever we look
    - Something to apply to our lives
  + The demonic is a reality we must be aware of
    - But we can have confidence in our God
* The division implied by Jesus acts is made explicit

**Section 3: When we Act forgiveness is provided**

*Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.*

* Jesus speaks of our acts, and specifically sinful acts
  + Acts which reject God
* Blasphemy against the holy spirit
  + The sin against the Holy Spirit has never been fully explained
  + It is not difficult to show what it is not
    - …
  + Encourage that if this is something worried about, not something with which to be concerned
* More encouragements: there is nothing too blasphemous for people to say about Christ
  + Pharisees declare that what Jesus has done is by the prince of devils (already seen to be absurd)
  + Pharisees are not the only people to have lost sight of logic, good sense, temper

**Section 4: When we Speak our words are guided**

*“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgement people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

**Conclusion**