My Beloved Ones,

In this Sunday’s Gospel, we see two great miracles. First, our Lord took pity on a group of blind men and healed them. Since Christ had begun to draw people wherever He went, after the healing, He “…sternly ordered them, ‘See that no one knows of this’” (Matthew 9:30). However, these men did not keep His request, “[b]ut they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district” (Matthew 9:31). Therefore, when “…a demoniac who was mute was brought to him…” a crowd had gathered, including a group of Pharisees (Matthew 9:32).

“And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, ‘Never has anything like this been seen in Israel’” (Matthew 9:33). However, the Pharisees were not impressed. These men had devoted themselves to the Law of Moses, and now there was this stranger who broke the Law by healing on the Sabbath. Hearing the praise the people offered to Jesus, their hearts became filled with pride and jealousy. They had spent their lives studying His Word, and so to justify their anger, they said, “By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons” (Matthew 9:34). They knew the history of God’s wonders, but the only way they could explain the miracles, without giving Christ the glory, was to make His power from the Devil. The sad truth is that while they justified themselves by twisting Christ’s goodness into evil, their good works were actually full of hatred, superiority, and judgement.

The Pharisees may no longer exist today, but their spirit of using God’s Word to condemn is still very much a part of our fallen world. When the Pharisees criticize our Lord for showing mercy to the demoniac, or forgiveness to the sinner, we should look beyond the past, and examine our own hearts. Have we shown Pharisaical spirit when we judged another person, whether it is a friend, or a stranger?

Let us return to those blind men, who disregarded our Lord’s instructions to keep silent and instead spread the word of Christ’s miracle. Unlike the Pharisees, they did this is not out of an evil, or a stubborn spirit, but simply because they were so full of joy and amazement at what had been done for them, they had to preach the Good News.

After prayerful meditation of our own words and deeds, may we do our best to instead live like these men, rather than the Pharisees: so that instead of judgement and negativity, we may be full of faith and love.

+ALEXIOS  
Metropolitan of Atlanta