

# Sight for the Blind

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, everyone. It's good to see you here.

If we haven't met, my name is Keith Knowlton. It's my pleasure to be able to lead us in the preaching of God's Word this morning. If you've been with us the last few weeks, you know that we've been walking through the book of John, and we'll be continuing to look at the Gospel of John today.

We'll be looking specifically at John chapter 9. As we get going, though, I would imagine that there may be some Harry Potter fans in our midst.

I admit that when my family and I moved to Scotland last year, I had not read a single book nor watched a single Harry Potter movie. But as part of our assimilation into the culture here, we thought it may be appropriate, so our family and I have been reading through the books together, and we've so far read through three of them.

And although I'm no Harry Potter expert by any stretch of the imagination, one element of symbolism that is obvious within those books is this struggle between light and darkness.

[ 1 : 10 ] And so if you haven't picked up this already as we've started our sermon, this idea of light, this is what we see in Harry Potter. And this struggle that occurs between individual characters, a struggle that occurs between external forces.

We see these symbols of darkness like the dark arts or these dark wizards or dementors. And so darkness, of course, it symbolizes death. It symbolizes evil.

We have light that symbolizes life and goodness. And of course, these themes aren't specific to Harry Potter, right? I mean, if you look throughout literature, the symbolism of light and darkness and the struggle between the two is prevalent in movies and books of all forms.

And so today, as we look at the Gospel of John, there may be no better use of this symbolism than throughout this Gospel. It's really one of the main themes that we see over and over again repeated by John, this idea of Jesus being the light of the world.

So from the very beginning of the Gospel of John, we see in these very first verses, referring to Jesus, in him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[ 2 : 25 ] We see the symbolism continued with Jesus and his interaction with Nicodemus in John 3. Nicodemus comes in the darkness of the night, seeking the light of the Gospel. Jesus himself says that he is the light of the world in John 8.

And now we are here, we're going to be looking at John 9 today, this account of Jesus healing the blind man. Which appropriately takes place in the midst of the Feast of the Tabernacles, where they would be celebrating light.

There would be these large oil lamps that would light up the temple, that would be used to illuminate the people in their worship in the day and also through the night. And so this symbolism that we're going to see throughout is something I want us to focus on today, that Jesus as our Messiah, he is the light of the world.

He is the one who leads us from darkness into light, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. So as we look at John 9, this is a lengthy chapter.

We're going to read it in its entirety. And so we can read that now, and let's see if we can make it through together. John 9, chapter 1. As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

[ 3 : 34 ] His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.

Go, he told them, wash in the pool of Siloam. This word means sent. And so the man went and washed and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?

Some claimed that it was. Others said, No, it only looks like him. But he himself insisted, I am the man. How then were your eyes open, they asked.

He replied, The man who they called Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. And so I went and washed, and then I could see. Where is this man, they asked.

[ 4 : 40 ] I don't know, he said. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore, the Pharisees also asked him how he had received sight.

He put mud on my eyes, the man replied, and I washed, and now I see. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath. But others asked, How can a sinner perform such signs?

So they were divided. Then they turned again to the blind man. What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, He is a prophet. They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

Is this your son, they asked. Is this the one who, say, was born blind? How is it that he can now see? We know he is our son, the parents answered, and we know he was born blind.

But how he can see now or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders who had already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

[ 5 : 49 ] That's why his parents said, He is of age. Ask him. A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. Give glory to God by telling the truth, they said. We know this man is a sinner.

He replied, Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know. One thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see. Then they asked him, What did he do to you?

How did he open your eyes? He answered, I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too? Then they hurled insults at him and said, You are this fellow's disciple.

We are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses. But as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from. The man answered, Now that is remarkable.

You don't know where he comes from. Yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. No one has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

[ 6 : 48 ] If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. To this they replied, You are steeped in the sin at birth. How dare you lecture us? And they threw him out. Jesus heard that they had thrown him out.

And when he found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man? Who is he, sir? The man asked. Tell me so that I may believe in him. Jesus said, You have now seen him.

In fact, he is the one speaking with you. Then the man said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. Jesus said, For judgment I have come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, What? Are we blind too? Jesus said, If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin.

But now that you claim, now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. This is the word of God. Will you pray with me? Oh God, we pray that you will give us eyes to see and ears to hear this morning.

[ 7 : 51 ] Lord, we pray for the power of the gospel to be sent forth. We pray that I will be your humble messenger, Lord. We pray, Lord, that you will take away all distraction.

That the truth of this gospel that we see in this passage today, of Jesus being the light of the world, will sink in deep into our hearts and transform us, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Now, as I mentioned, if you've been with us the last several weeks, you know we've been walking through the gospel of John. And we've been looking at these seven signs, these seven miracles of Jesus that John records in order that the reader of the gospel may believe that Jesus is in fact the Christ, the Son of God.

And so today we come to that sixth miracle, Jesus healing this blind man. And so what we're going to do is we're simply going to walk through this passage together. And as we do, I want us to look at three main aspects of this narrative.

I want us to consider the disciples' question, Jesus' miracle, and the people's response. Disciples' question, Jesus' miracle, and the people's response.

[ 9 : 00 ] So let's first look at the disciples' question. We see Jesus and his disciples are walking together. They come across this blind man, and the disciples immediately ask, Who sinned here? Why is this man blind?

Did he sin, or was it his parents that sinned that caused this? And we see immediately there's this false assumption that disciples make. They have this thinking in their mind that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people, right?

It's this idea of karma. We've all heard this, right? We pay the consequences for our actions, whether good or bad. This would have been something, an idea that would have been pervasive in their society, and it's something that we even see in our society around us.

I mean, it doesn't take much. We've probably all heard of instant karma, right? You go to YouTube, you type in instant karma, you're going to see all sorts of video compilations of people doing something bad or doing something foolish, and immediately paying the consequences for it, right? Someone beating up someone who's helpless or defenseless for someone who's bigger and stronger to come in and hurt them. Someone who has this road rage and tries to run someone off the road, only to lose control of their own car and veer into a ditch.

[ 10 : 08 ] And we see this as automatic justice. Sometimes we get satisfaction from seeing it. That's what the disciples are seeing here. They don't offer any third option to Jesus.

It's this man's blind. Either he sinned or his parents sinned. They recognize that suffering must be a result of some divine punishment of God. And so we see this mindset actually in other parts of the Bible as well.

If we go back to the Old Testament to the story of Job, we know that Job was a man of God. He had great riches, and yet he loses them all. We see that his children die.

His livestock is stolen. His possessions are destroyed. Even himself, he's covered with these painful sores all over his body. And so what happens is friends come to him and say, you must have done something wrong.

God must be angry at you for some reason because of all this bad stuff that's happened to you. And so I think we may look at our lives sometimes, and we may be tempted to think the same thing, right?

[ 11 : 09 ] When things bad happen to us, when things are not going our way, we think, God must be angry at me for some reason. We must have done something wrong. I need to confess my sins so things turn around in my life.

But we need to understand that this, though we see examples even in the Bible of personal sin resulting in personal suffering, that connection is not absolute.

And so certainly we recognize that suffering comes because we have sin in the world generally, right? But that point isn't even what Jesus is making here. I mean, when he's answering the disciples, he could have just said, look, this guy's blind because we live in a fallen world.

And that's an accurate answer, but he doesn't, that's not his point. He goes further in verse 3. He says, Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in him.

This man was born blind so that God could receive the glory through his healing. Jesus making the point here that our suffering is not about us.

[ 12 : 13 ] We need to recognize that there is a reason and a purpose for our pain. God can use suffering in our lives in order to refine us, in order that he may ultimately receive the glory.

And so this doesn't mean that he's always going to take our struggle away, right? This is what he does in the passage. He heals the man in order to receive glory. But we need to recognize that's not the only way that God can receive glory through our suffering and pain.

He can receive glory in the midst of our pain and suffering. And so I think we could talk a lot about this point. But the fact is, I think there's people in our midst, maybe you are experiencing suffering or pain or loss.

Maybe that's spiritual or emotional or physical. And so we need to ask the question, what is God's purpose in our pain?

Is he doing this in order to teach greater dependence on him? Does he want us to demonstrate, he wants to demonstrate his strength in our weakness?

[13:17] Is this opportunity for us to encourage others or opportunity to profess that even though the physical world around us has failed us, that our strength is still in God alone?

Jesus continues in verse 4. He says this, As long as it is the day, we must do the work of him who sent me. And it's really interesting there.

He's using the first person plural. He's saying we, and he's including his disciples in that mission. We need to be about God's mission in bringing light into darkness.

So he's calling us into that too. And so he's saying in your suffering, in your hurting, in your pain, there is opportunity for you to shine light into this dark world around us.

And so that brings us to our second point then, looking at the disciples' question, but then also focusing on the miracle itself. In verse 6 it says, After saying this, Jesus spit on the ground, he made some mud with saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.

[14:19] Go, he told him, and wash in the pool of Siloam. The word that means sent. And so the man went and washed and came home seeing. Now this isn't the first time that Jesus has done a miracle like this on the Sabbath that's recorded in the Gospel of John.

We can go back to John 5, and we see the story of John healing the invalid. He tells him to stand up, take up his mat, and walk and go home, right? And we also record the response of the Pharisees here.

Rather than rejoicing in this miracle, they get angry at Jesus because they recognize that he's breaking their little rules that they've created surrounding the Sabbath. And so Jesus, when he comes here to this blind man, he certainly knows what he's getting himself into.

There's nothing, and so I think it's important then to focus on the method in which he heals somebody because there's nothing that requires him to put mud on his eyes or send him away to a pool to get cleansed, right?

Jesus, by the power of his own voice, his own words, could have healed this man. He's done it in the past, over and over again. We see examples of Christ healing, even people that aren't even in the same city as him.

[15:28] But here we see there is reason for God, or for Jesus doing this. He makes this mud, he puts it on his eyes, he tells him to wash in the pool of Siloam, and he's doing it essentially to break the tradition of the Pharisees.

We know that, first of all, performing a miracle at all would be considered work. That's breaking the Sabbath. The fact that he kneads this mud, any sort of kneading, like the kneading of dough, would have been a violation of the Sabbath.

Again, another violation of Jesus. Not only that, but he anoints this man, he puts that mud on his eyes, yet another violation. It's like if you have kids, or maybe you remember when you were a kid yourself, there's no one better that can get under your skin than your own sibling, right?

I think I see it in my house on an hourly basis. Kids get under each other's skin, they know how to push each other's button, even by one child looking at the other child the wrong way, is enough to set somebody off, right? And so this is kind of what Jesus is doing here.

He's purposefully triggering this controversy in order to point out the Pharisees' hypocrisy, in order to demonstrate his true purpose in coming. And so even in the name of this pool, Siloam, it means sent.

[16:37] Surely it isn't a coincidence that's lost on John here. He's pointing out that Jesus was sent by the Father to provide sight for the blind. And so the important part of this miracle then is not just the physical aspect of the healing.

It's much more the spiritual aspect. This physical healing points to the spiritual healing that Jesus offers. This water represents, in the pool here, represents the living water of Jesus that cleanses us. And so really, once we look at this miracle, it's really a microcosm of the state of man in general. We as humans are sinful. We all are blind.

It says in Isaiah 57, we walk in darkness. We grope as if we have no eyes. We stumble at noonday as if it's night. So the fact is, we have no ability to see Christ.

We have no desire. We have no ability to save ourselves. Yet Jesus comes in to this man's helpless state. And as it says in Colossians, he rescued him from the dominion of darkness and welcomed him into the kingdom of light.

[ 17 : 52 ] And so the miracle that happens in this man's life is the same miracle that can happen in each of our lives when we are empowered by the spirit to recognize that Jesus is the son of God.

It is Jesus alone who saves. And so this brings us then to our final point. Is this how the people in this story responded?

With rejoicing, with recognizing that Jesus was the Messiah? Well, we actually see four different responses here throughout the story. We see, first of all, the response of the neighbors that the blind man goes to, the response of the Pharisees, the response of this blind man's parents, and then the response of the blind man himself.

And so I want us to consider each one of these just briefly. First, the response of the neighbors. When this blind man goes to his neighbors at first, many of them have unbelief. This can't be the guy who was blind before.

He must just look like him. They get to the point of recognizing, okay, this is the man, but they ask the question, well, how are your eyes opened? And we need to take you to go see the Pharisees.

[ 18 : 58 ] You can see their error here. They don't ask who healed him. They ask how he was healed. They're more concerned about the mechanics of this miracle than the meaning of the miracle.

Who was behind this miracle? And when the man tells them, it was Jesus, it was Jesus who healed me. You would think immediately they'd try to go find this miracle worker, Jesus, to learn more about him.

But instead, they take this man to the Pharisees. We recognize they are asking the wrong questions and seeking the answers in the wrong places. And so I think we need to consider ourselves.

When this happens, when we face controversy or question our lives, where are we seeking answers? Are we looking for answers from ourselves, from society, from science, or are we looking for true solutions, for truth that comes from the giver of all truth, Jesus?

Well, the Pharisees have a very similar response, right? Now, if you're not familiar with Pharisees, we know that these guys are the religious leaders of the time. These would have been respected and honored by the Jewish community.

[ 20 : 06 ] We know they're very good at keeping laws. In fact, they would create these little rules around the laws so they wouldn't ever get close to breaking the laws, and they enforced those rules as if they were the law themselves.

And so here, we recognize that what happens here when someone transgresses their little rules, immediately called a sinner.

So rather than recognizing this miracle and offering praise and awe to Jesus, they respond with suspicion and accusation. Jesus must be a sinner.

And so we follow them in this story on this witch hunt, right? They're approached by these neighbors. They talk to the blind man. They're not satisfied. They go to the blind man's parents, still don't get the answers they want, come back to the blind man.

And we see all the while this dilemma that's building. It's this line of logic that's confronting them that they don't really know what to deal with.

[ 21 : 04 ] Because the fact is, they recognize that it's only God who can heal a blind man. And so if Jesus healed this man, then Jesus must be from God. And if Jesus is from God, then he must have authority over us.

And if he has authority over us, we must submit to him. It's a logical conclusion they're not willing to accept. They recognize that it's a threat to their way of life.

It's a threat to all that they have built up about themselves. Their position and their priorities blind them from recognizing that Jesus is the Christ.

And so again, is this something that may describe us at times? Maybe if you're not a believer, you're looking for reasons not to believe. If you don't want this whole Christianity thing to disrupt your way of life, you worry about what people may think, what changes you might have to make, how you've already invested in this carefully curated life, you're concerned about how submission to

Jesus as Lord may change that.

What is the cost of following Jesus? And so we see by the end of this investigation that the Pharisees are just in this hot mess, right?

[ 22 : 21 ] We've witnessed arguments like this before, right? When two people are arguing, you see one side that's starting to lose, we can kind of see civility go out the window, right? They stop attacking the question itself or the points of controversy and just start attacking the other person.

Unfortunately, we see this in politics a lot, right? We see politicians or those who hold to certain political views rather than saying, oh, your policy is bad for this reason. We say, no, you are bad for supporting that policy.

And so that's what we see here in verse 28. The Pharisees, it says, they hurled insults at this man. Verse 34, they said, you are steeped in sin. You were steeped in sin at birth.

And so we see their argument simply devolves into name calling. But it's funny though, this accusation they throw on this blind man, it really is essentially an admission that he was born a blind, something that they were trying to deny initially.

We see their argument is just completely shocked. Well, unfortunately, if we turn to the response of the parents, they did very little to push back on these Pharisees.

[ 23 : 33 ] The Pharisees come to them, they ask him, is this really your son? Was your son really born blind? And they respond, yes, he was born blind. We know that. But as you can see now, we don't know who did it.

We don't know who opened his eyes, how it happened. You need to ask him. He's of age. He can speak for himself. And it's really a shocking response if we think about it, right? I mean, if you're a parent and your child who's been blind their whole life, receives their sight, and tells you how it happened, you'd naturally believe them.

There'd be no reason to discount them. And yet these parents here aren't willing to confess what their son has told them. And say, we don't know. Ask him. He's of age. And so we see John gives the reason for this.

They were afraid because the Jewish leaders had already threatened that whoever acknowledged Jesus the Messiah would be kicked out of the synagogue. And so this is a really big deal. In a deeply religious society and culture, to not be able to worship in the synagogue is basically being excommunicated from society, being kicked out of your community, all because they recognized that it was Jesus that healed their son.

And so again, it's one of these urges that we can feel sometimes. We just want to fit in. We don't want our faith to ruin this normal life that we think we have, right?

[ 24 : 52 ] Because if we recognize in our day and age, recognize that Jesus is Messiah is nearly just as extreme as it was back in the New Testament time. I mean, you want to feel like an outcast. University students, go to your classmates and tell them that you're a Christian.

Go to your coworkers or your family or your friends and tell them you're a follower of Christ and see what happens. You want to feel ostracized. But we see the response of this man.

This man who is blind from birth. We recognize how excited he must have been. And the thing is, it doesn't really say his age here, but we can kind of tell from the fact that the parents respond and say he's of age, go ask him, he can talk for himself, makes us, it's reasonable to assume the fact that he must have been young himself.

Probably a young adult or a teenager. And so it's interesting to see his growth. It's what I like most about the story is to see this progression in his own emotion, in his own belief in the story.

And so you can imagine, like I said, how excited he must be to now receive sight for the first time in his life. He wants to run about, he wants to experience things, and yet he's getting pulled in to this interrogation from the Pharisees.

[ 26 : 11 ] And so we see this growing frustration that occurs when all these people hurl false accusations at him or at Jesus and they're repeating the same questions, the same talking points over and over again.

We get down to verse 25, the Pharisees have again called Jesus a sinner. And this is how he responds, whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know, I was blind, but now I see.

What a wonderful, simple, obvious statement. In the midst of all these Pharisees, he's trying to figure out exactly how Jesus broke their nitpicky little rules.

He points out what's most important here. I can see my life has been transformed and you guys don't get it. You know, he responds it in a way that I would think would probably be really typical of a teenage response, certainly in that time, certainly today.

And it's this wonderful kind of snarkiness that I think is so humorous. When he's asked again, well, how did Jesus heal you? He says, why do I have to repeat myself again?

[ 27 : 20 ] Do you want to be one of his disciples too? And so you can kind of just feel that answer kind of just dripping with sarcasm, right? And so if you're a teenager, like this has got to be one of your favorite verses in the Bible.

He's fed up with these Pharisees. He's baffled by their ignorance. And so that leads him to actually lecture the Pharisees. We see this in verse 30. He says, now that is remarkable. You don't know where he comes from, yet you opened his eyes, yet he opened my eyes.

We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. No one has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. And so this is the point that we see that this transformation, this miracle is not only physical in nature.

This is a spiritual awakening where this man sees that Jesus is the son of God. And so we see this progression because at the beginning where he's talking to his neighbor, he said, this man named Jesus healed me.

When the Pharisees approach him and say, well, what do you think about this man? He says, he's a prophet. And now the second time around when the Pharisees come back and question him again, he says, he is divine.

[ 28 : 27 ] But it doesn't end there because Jesus returns in verse 35. He comes back to this man after he hears he's been thrown out of the synagogue and he says, do you believe in the son of man?

The blind man responds, who is he? Tell me so that I may believe. Jesus basically says, you're looking at him, right? And the man responds, Lord, I believe.

And he worships him. His belief turns to worship. And so his neighbors, his parents, the Pharisees, none of them recognize who Jesus is.

Yet this blind man who's brought out of darkness into light sees Christ and he can do nothing but worship. And so that's a question for us.

How do we respond to this truth? All this symbolism that we see throughout the Gospel of John between light and darkness and sight and blindness, it's not just this literary effect to make the story sound good, right?

[ 29 : 31 ] This is the Gospel. Jesus says in verse 39, for judgment I have come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. Jesus came to this helpless, hopeless man and gave him sight.

That is his mission, to save sinners by his blood for his glory. And so naturally, there's going to be people that don't believe, right?

There's going to be those who think, I don't need saving. I'm good enough on my own. I can trust my own capabilities or my own intellect or my own reasoning. I don't need saving.

Jesus says, no, no, no. You are spiritually blind. And if you think you are good enough on your own, you are guilty already. And so it's only those who recognize their blindness, who admit the need for a miracle, those are the people that Jesus saves.

And so it is with each of us today. Right? This is the reality of the Gospel, that without Christ, we are blind. It goes further and says we are dead in our sins.

[ 30 : 52 ] But Christ has come to each one of us, just like this blind man in this story. He comes to us in our brokenness and our fallenness and our blindness and he offers eternal and total healing.

And so this is the urge this morning. This is the invitation if you are not in Christ to come in your sickness, in your suffering, in your sorrow, even in your doubt, and come to Christ who offers healing through his blood so that the work of God may be displayed in you.

Let's pray. God, we thank you that you are the ultimate healer, that you sent your Son to bring sight to those who are blind, to bring light into darkness, and so Lord, if there's those here that don't know you, we pray for conviction.

We pray that they may recognize their need for saving. They may recognize the free gift that you offer to them to bring them into the kingdom of light.

And God, for those of us who know you, may we rejoice in that reality to know of the saving of our Lord Jesus. Not anything we've done, but everything that he has done to pay the penalty for our sin. [ 32 : 26 ] May we desire to share that light into our dark world around us that you may receive all the glory and honor and praise. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. And we have our final hymn this morning, All I Have is Christ.

So if you will stand and we can sing together. I once was lost, in darkest night, yet thought I knew the way.

The sin that promised joy in life had led me to the grave. I had no hope that you would own a rebel to your will.

And if you had not loved me first, I would refuse you still. But as I ran my hell-bound race, indifferent to the cause, you looked upon my helpless state and led me to the cross.

And I beheld God's love displayed, you suffered in my place. You bore the wrath reserved for me. [ 34 : 34 ] Now all I know is grace. Jesus is my life.

All I have is Christ. All I have is Christ.

All I have is Christ. Hallelujah, all I have is Christ. Hallelujah, Jesus is my life.

Now, Lord, I would be yours alone and live so all might see.

The strength to follow your commands could never come from me. Oh, Father, use my ransomed life in any way you choose.

[ 35 : 51 ] And let my song forever be, my only boast is you. Hallelujah, all I have is Christ.

Hallelujah, Jesus is my life. Hallelujah, all I have is Christ.

Hallelujah, Jesus is my life. Hallelujah, Jesus is my life.

From the book of Jude. To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy. To the only God, our Savior, be glory and majesty and power and authority through Christ Jesus, our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.