

Jesus Heals The Blind

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[0 : 00] John 9, verses 1-18 and 24-34 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

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 work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, where no one can work.

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Having said this, he pat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. Go, he told him, wash in the pool of Siloam. So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His name was in those who had formerly seen him begging, asked. Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?

[1 : 03] Some claimed that he was. Others said, no, he only looks like him. But he himself insisted, I am the man. How then were your eyes opened?

They demanded. He replied, the man they called Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.

Where is this man? They asked him. 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 a 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 do such miraculous signs? So they were divided. Finally they turned again to the blind man.

[2 : 10] What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, he is a prophet. The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

In verse 24, a second time they summoned the man who had been blind. Give glory to God, they said. We know this man is a sinner.

He replied, whether he is a sinner or not, I don't 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.

[3 : 19] 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 man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

To this they replied, you are steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us? And they threw him out. So back again to the Gospel of John, the sixth sign, the healing of the man born blind.

And we'll take that in connection with what we read at the beginning, where Jesus said, I am the light of the world, where he has come to shine in the darkness, to reveal the glory and the truth of God to us.

Let me begin with an interview that I came across this week of a man left almost entirely blind, having been shot in a drug deal that went badly wrong in the States.

[4 : 30] And in that interview, the man revealed how those events humbled him. And he said, as my physical eyes were closed, my spiritual eyes were opened, as it were.

I finally saw how I'd been treating people. I changed. It was a terrible price to pay. And yet I must say it was worth it.

Now our story today is very different. The man had been born physically blind, but then Jesus healed him. But there's similarity in that spiritually, his eyes too were opened, as his physical eyes, in his case, were opened also, as Jesus, by his mercy, brought that wonderful miracle.

So our sixth sign, it reveals to us, is a signpost to us that Jesus comes to shine God's light in our world, to bring mercy, to bring restoration, to bring hope and healing.

But he also comes as a light that reveals the glory and the truth of God. Now some, and we'll see this really clearly as we think about the story, some are blinded by the light.

[5 : 44] They are blind to the truth of Jesus. They reject him and turn their back on him. But others, like this man here, are guided by the light into life-changing joy.

One, Saviour Jesus, two very different responses. As his light shines, as preachers of our past age used to say, the same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay.

So again, we'll be thinking about our own response. But let's begin thinking about this sign where Jesus brings light out of darkness. Now, did you notice that our story begins with a faulty, but at the same time, a common view of suffering at the time of Jesus?

His disciples, seeing a man blind from birth, asked who sinned, this man or his parents. They wanted to make a straight line connection between sin and suffering.

Either a person sinned, a family member sinned. And so judgment had come. They're looking for blame. Jesus takes a different view. He says that neither this man nor his parents, but it happened so the works of God might be displayed in him.

[7 : 03] So suffering is regarded as not outside of God's control. And this man's suffering will result in God's work being displayed.

Just as a brief side note, suffering instinctively makes people, makes us ask the why question.

Why this pain? Why is this happening to me or to this other group? And cultures throughout history have always looked to find answer and to find purpose in suffering.

And one of the challenges with the modern Western view of the world, that this material world is all there is, where pleasure and comfort are the only goal to pursue, then suffering really has no purpose.

Suffering is nothing other than a chaotic interruption. And so as a consequence, our modern way of thinking provides no real resources for dealing with suffering.

[8 : 10] So we're more comfortable than people have ever been, but we feel the trauma of loss and grief and suffering more than any time in history. Christianity is different.

Think about the story of the two men, the drug dealer who became a Christian, the blind man in our story. They will both say to us in their stories, suffering can be redeemed in the hands of God.

And Christianity, the Bible says that. You know, suffering has purpose, can have purpose in our lives. It can be a megaphone, like C.S. Lewis said, to get attention, to remind us of higher realities, to remind us of our mortality or eternal realities.

In the Christian experience, suffering can have that refining process of helping us to mature and grow in faith. And we see, especially in the coming of Jesus, that our God is not distant and uninvolved, but in Jesus, he knows suffering.

And further, God is able to bring good from evil. And we see that especially in the cross of Jesus, where that great injustice, Jesus killed by evil men, according to God's plan, became the means for salvation for everyone who would believe.

[9 : 41] So Christianity, if you're tuning in and you're suffering and you're asking why, Christianity has resources for you. But to go on with our story, then we see Jesus is urgent in his sense of mission.

As long as it's day, we must do the works of him who sent me, because night is coming. Now, what does Jesus mean by that? So Jesus came to be the light of the world. So he came revealing in his person, the glory of God, the glory of God's plan of salvation, the sending of his own son, in rescuing people from moral and spiritual darkness, in recovering us, restoring us to relationship with God.

And he knows that he has only a certain amount of time before the night will come, referring to his arrest and his day. So Jesus would not always be among us, but while he was, he wanted to be doing the work of God.

And so this sign is the work of God. He's bringing light where there was darkness. This is both physically and spiritually true in the man's case. How does he do it?

Verse six, we see Jesus takes the initiative, spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, put it on the man's eyes, go wash in the pool of Siloam. He makes a mud pack and he gives him a command to go.

[11:07] And a miracle of healing takes place. Just as in creation, God said, let there be light.

And there was light to expel the darkness. So in this story of new creation, Jesus' light shines and trusting in Jesus and seeing his glory means the end of our spiritual darkness.

As the light of God's salvation shines, to fall under those beams and to receive that warmth is to know light and life and restoration.

Every bit as true as in this man's case. Now, the Pharisees. The Pharisees, as we'll see, are blind to the light.

They reject because of pride and prejudice. So as the story goes on, what happens is that the man's neighbours are shocked and they're confused. First century people weren't instinctively gullible.

[12:20] They knew people who were blind didn't just receive their sight. And so they're asking the question, what are we to make of this? And so they take it to the Pharisees as the religious and moral leaders of the day.

And in verses 14 to 34 of our text, what we see effectively, we don't have time to read it, but there's an official investigation that begins into this incident. We get three different interrogations, twice of the man born blind and once of his parents.

But what we'll see is pride and prejudice towards Jesus that the verdict is already in. They're not coming to the evidence with an open mind. Let me at this point issue a caution for each of you listening today to be careful that pride and prejudice in our own hearts wouldn't stop you from really exploring who Jesus is to thinking about his claims and the implications of his life and death and resurrection.

Don't be like the Pharisees, in other words. Don't dismiss him out of court. Rather, hear him on his own terms.

Read the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and discover Jesus for yourself. Now let's think about these interrogations briefly. Verse 1's in verses 14 to 17.

[13:47] They bring the blind man in and the focus is on how did this happen? Not on who did it. Not only for someone to worship. There's also a focus on Sabbath rules.

It happens on a Sabbath. And so here's this controversy about the Sabbath again. And according to their extra rules, not biblical rules, extra rules, Jesus has broken their laws because he has shown mercy on a Sabbath when it's not life and death.

They said that was wrong. How different is that to God who delights to show mercy? They would have blamed Jesus for kneading mud as work and anointing eyes was also considered unnecessary work.

So there's three strikes against Jesus' name. So in their pride, they say this man is not from God. This man is a sinner.

He is a lawbreaker. They stand in judgment of Jesus because he doesn't fit into their thinking. Although not all of them agree.

[14:59] So some of the Pharisees said, how can a sinner perform such signs? So some are thinking, well, hold on a minute. This is the power of God at work. So we need to do a rethink.

We need to assess this evidence. And there's a really healthy attitude to follow the evidence where it leads. Very difficult to not come with their own bias and prejudice.

But read the Bible with an open mind. Follow the evidence to where it leads. Second interrogation, verses 18 to 23, takes place with the man's parents.

And there they're asking the question, who is this guy? Is he really your son? Was he really born blind? But they're also asking them, how is he able to see?

So they confirm the first, yes, he's our son, but they're afraid to answer the second. There's a penalty in force. Anyone who speaks up for Jesus is going to get thrown out of the synagogue,

thrown out of sort of religious community.

[16:06] And so they don't want to speak. They say, well, our son's old enough. Just ask him. And so they bring him back in, a third interrogation from verse 24 to 34. And what we see from them is absolute cast iron pride and certainty that they are on God's side, that they're the good guys, that Jesus is the enemy, that they stand, as it were, on the right side of history.

So they can say, verse 24, we know this man is a sinner. They can say of themselves, we're disciples of Moses. We know God spoke to Moses.

But this fellow, Jesus, we know where he came from. And they'll say of the man, because they don't like the way he's responding, you were steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us?

They are so certain of their position. They never stop to consider where is the power of Jesus coming from? Where is his authority coming from?

They claim to be on Moses' side. But Jesus, in chapter 5 and verse 45, has already said to them, you're accused of Moses, in whom your hopes are set. If you believe Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

[17:19] Moses promised a prophet to come who would be like him, who would know God face to face, who would lead the people to spiritual freedom.

And that, of course, is Jesus. So they have declared their verdict on Jesus. He's a sinner. He's not a friend of God.

They want nothing to do with him. Well, Jesus delivers his verdict on the Pharisees. Verse 41. If you are blind, you would not be guilty of sin. But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

To reject Jesus is to stand on the wrong side of history, is to be in the dark spiritually, to remain in the guilt of our sin before God.

Having the laws of Moses cannot help. The law came after the promise and after grace. Jesus came full of grace and truth.

[18:20] Jesus is the light of the world. And what's clear from the Pharisees is that his light as it shines, it has this function of exposing the darkness of sin.

Sunshine has that effect, doesn't it? You clean your car, you clean your windows, you think you've done a great job, then the sun shines and you see it, miss that cobweb or you still see that smear there. Or think about those police camera action shows.

You know, where there's the police helicopter and he's got this night vision camera and there's some kind of criminal hiding in the bushes, think they can't be seen, but the light exposes. That's one of the functions of Jesus coming.

Jesus must expose the fact that we have sinned. And so he must humble us. Just like the former drug dealer.

I was humbled by my circumstances, humbled ultimately in the hands of God to recognise the darkness that lurks in our hearts, in our lives, in our minds.

[19:30] Ways in which we have failed to love God, ways in which we have failed to love others. Jesus must humble us to admit that we need a saviour, that we cannot get our way to God by ourselves, that we cannot have hope in life and in death without Jesus.

So again, read the Gospels, discover Jesus. And if you've already come to that point where you know that Jesus came to be a saviour for sinners and you know you're a sinner, then choose Jesus. Choose the light. Turn to him. Turn away from sin. Trust in him and live enjoying his light every day. So that's the Pharisees, but we need to concentrate a little bit of attention on the man who gives a powerful testimony to Jesus as the light of the world.

I always find it fascinating to read accounts of how the early church went from a very small handful of followers of Jesus in Jerusalem to spreading and coming to dominate the Roman Empire by the fourth century.

And that happened largely because of ordinary men and women sharing their stories of discovering the truth about Jesus and how he had changed them.

[20:59] That change largely came as Christians faithfully lived their lives suffering and serving and all the while seeking to give glory to Jesus.

People like this guy are why the church crew in the face of official opposition, as he faces insult and ridicule and the potential loss of community, he clearly, honestly, boldly spoke of what Jesus had done.

He was a man who from the moment Jesus came into his life was all about Jesus. He's a wonderful model for us. And the story of Jesus' powerful, transforming work in his life gave him the opportunity to speak and he didn't waste it.

Whether it's to friends and neighbours, whether it's to the religious opposition, that's a beautiful pattern for us to follow in the 21st century, whether you're in Edinburgh, whether you're somewhere else.

To use our stories if we're Christians to give glory to Jesus. So we see it with his neighbours when they say, is that really you?

[22 : 13] What earth has happened to you? What does he say? Jesus made me see. When the Pharisees are interrogating him, who do you say Jesus is? He answers, he is a prophet.

Clearly, he speaks God's word with God's power. And when they accuse Jesus of being a sinner, the man says, that's 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. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. God performed a miracle. God doesn't listen to sinners, but he listens to the godly. Jesus must be from God. There's no other way to explain his power.

Very simple, very clear, very powerful testimony. At this stage, he doesn't know everything about the identity of Jesus, but still there is that clear faith and that powerful testimony.

[23 : 12] And Jesus isn't done with him. In verse 35, we see Jesus again take the initiative.

Hearing that he's been thrown out of the synagogue, he found him and said, do you believe in the son of man?

Jesus wants to give him clearer spiritual light. And so what he does in this man's life is he reveals himself to the man as the son of man. A great title from Daniel chapter 7 of this figure coming from the presence of God, sent with glory and authority and the right to rule forever.

Jesus says, that's me. I am God's true and final prophet and king. And the man's response in verse 38, the man said, Lord, I believe.

And he worshipped him. He believes and he honours. For you, if you are a Christian listening today, recognise that Jesus wants to keep giving us new sight, new insight into his glory, his love, his goodness.

The spiritual blessings that we have in him, the home in heaven that he's laid up for us. So stay close to him. Over the summer, you'll keep reading and praying, obeying, walking with him, depending on him.

[24 : 35] That's the true sunshine to bathe in this summer and every day of our lives. There's so much to know about our infinitely glorious saviour, Jesus.

And also, as Christians, we all have a once I was blind and now I can see story. And so we have the opportunity to share that with others.

For me, I can recognise thinking about my own life very much that the Pharisee attitude of thinking that so long as I was trying to keep a set of moral rules and trying really hard to earn God's approval, then I'd be okay.

But it wasn't until the light dawned in my heart to expose the darkness of my sin and my unbelief, the folly of thinking that by myself I could be good enough for God, the reality of eternal judgment for not having true faith in Jesus.

It was that exposing of the gospel that also caused me to see the wonderful light of the cross. That out of sheer love and grace God sent his son to live for me, to die for me and to rise for me, to save me from my sin, to save me from my cell.

[26 : 09] Now all of us have a story to share and maybe we need to be creative in thinking how can I share something of my story, of my faith online or face-to-face as we see people over this holiday period.

Let me just finish here. If you find yourself today, wherever you're tuning in, in a time of darkness, maybe suffering, maybe fearful, can I ask you to humbly come to Jesus as the light, the one who came in love, the one who came to die in the darkness under the judgment of God so that you might have the light of life.

Come to him with your tears and your pain and your fears. Know him walking ahead of you. Know him walking with you through pain and suffering and giving you hope that one day this will be passed, that there'll be the great reversal, everything sad coming untrue with the hope of resurrection.

Thanks. See you.