

Jesus removes blindness

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[0 : 00] So we're going to look in John chapter 9, which is the long story of somebody coming to see, somebody having their eyes opened.

! And it is quite a remarkable story and there's some surprising twists and turns. Right at the end of it Jesus says rather solemnly, verse 39, For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

This is what Jesus is saying. I've come into this world and there will be two effects of this. One, that blind people will see, which is amazing and great.

And another effect, that people who see will become blind, which sounds much more, I don't know, serious?

Sounds a bit unfortunate, doesn't it? Sounds rather awful. So what is this judgment that Jesus comes into the world to bring? That's what we're going to look at this morning.

[1 : 19] Jesus says, I'm going to bring judgment into the world. And the word for judgment is not actually crisis, but it's a word like it.

So I'm using a preacher's trick this morning. This is a sort of sister word to the word that Jesus actually used, but it works in English, doesn't it? Because Jesus brings crisis in the sense of device, decisive division.

That's just what Jesus does because he's that sort of person. He's not the sort of person, you know, you can take him or leave him.

He's much more assertive than that. And he asserts himself into people's lives and produces, well, one reaction or another.

Jesus brings crisis, and that's what we're going to look at this morning. So would you like to follow it through with me? Last week we looked at the beginning of chapter 9, at the particular miracle that was done.

[2 : 28] Here's a blind man. He doesn't seem to ask anything of Jesus. Jesus just does this to him. In chapter 9, verse 6, Jesus spits on the ground and makes some mud with the saliva and puts it on the man's eyes.

It's a rather strange thing to do. I think it's close to the idea of making an ointment for eyes. There's a similar sort of thing in ancient history.

Seems to be like making an eye salve or an ointment. He puts this on the man's eyes, and then he says, Go. Then he says, Wash in the pool of Siloam.

The pool has an important name. It means scent. And the man goes. He washed. And he came home seeing.

Just amazing. It's sort of in three verbs, isn't it? Go. Wash. And I see. So the two are in the past tense, and the C is in the present tense.

[3 : 41] And I see. What an amazing thing. There's the equation. A blind person plus mud plus wash.

But it's actually Jesus who prescribes the mud and the wash, and he can see. That's the equation that we keep coming back to. Blind plus Jesus equals sight.

Now what happens next in, as John tells this to us, is he goes through lots of conversations that take place between various people about this sort of chewing on it, attacking it, defending it, really having a go at this guy.

So I've called it questions and answers, but it really isn't questions and answers. It's more like interrogation. It's more like a set of interrogations that this man goes through.

They're not Q&A; sessions, although that's what I've written. They have a go at him. Jesus brings this sort of conflict.

[4 : 57] And you might like to spot, as we go through, the number of questions that get asked. How? What? Where? How? How? What? How? Where?

Who? All these sort of questions get fired at various people, most of all fired at the man. And also notice as we go through, the things that people say they know and they don't know. Well, one, I know this. Don't know that. We know this. That can't be right. So you just watch the way that this develops as we go through. And that's what we'll do this morning. We'll just go through and see these questions and answers. So it begins with verse 8. And the man says, I am.

I am the man. So here's the neighbors and the man. And the questions. The questions. So first question is, isn't this mistaken identity?

[6 : 09] Do you know what it's like when you see somebody and then you see them again and they're wearing different clothes and you think, is that the same person? Or does it just look like him?

I've got a neighbor who I've been saying good morning to for quite a long time and I realize it's the wrong person. It just looks like her. I once saw them both in the same evening.

I thought, no, that's her, isn't it? I've been saying good morning to the wrong person. And I think this is what they're thinking. It just looks like him. And the man says, no, definitely me.

Interestingly, he uses the phrase I am. Jesus uses the same phrase with a lot more loading to it because when Jesus uses it, you can really sense the echo of I am who I am, which is God's name for himself in the Old Testament.

But the man uses the same phrase. No, it's me. It's me. Then this question arises, verse 10, how?

[7 : 14] How then were your eyes opened, they demanded? And he says, verse 11, 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 saw, then I could see. So he just goes through that equation again.

Notice this question, how? We think it's a modern question, don't we? We think only modern scientific people have started asking how. And therefore, modern scientific people being so much cleverer than people used to be.

Modern scientific people can't believe in miracles because when they ask how, they don't get an answer. Well, actually, people have been asking how ever since. Right back. This is a typical Pharisee question.

How? How? How? Now, you notice the man doesn't try to answer how. He just says, this is what happened. And he won't budge from that. And I'm a real fan of this guy.

[8 : 20] He's terrific. And he says, these are the facts. I'm going to take my stand on this and I'm not going to be budged. The man they called Jesus, I'm the blind man.

The man they called Jesus made some mud, put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and I washed and I can see. And then they ask another question.

Verse 12. Where is this man? To which the man born blind correctly answers, I don't know.

So that's the first interrogation with the neighbors. It's a mistaken identity. It's a mistake. No, it isn't, says the man. It's me.

How did it happen? Well, I can't answer that. But I know what did happen. And where's the man? I don't know. I'm sorry, I'm ignorant of that. So there's the set of questions in that paragraph.

[9 : 25] And I've just put there to notice the things that people know and don't know. The man knows what happened. But he says, I don't know where Jesus is, which was a truthful answer.

Let's now go into the next verses with the Pharisees and the man. So the neighbors bring the man to the Pharisees.

And just as a convention, I put the Pharisees wearing hats so you can tell who they are. Now, I don't really know why the neighbors do this. It doesn't seem to be a particularly kind thing to do. It is like reporting your next door neighbors to the council for playing loud music at night. That sort of thing. They seem to want that the guy should be sorted out by somebody in authority.

Verse 13. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Aha. Now, the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

[10 : 29] Therefore, the Pharisees also asked him. Let's just notice. Here is an ingredient that comes into this. It's to do with the Jewish tradition.

It's to do with what's in the Bible. So the Sabbath for Jews would be the Saturday, the day of rest. And Jesus gets into trouble about the Sabbath quite a bit.

And what they're saying is, the law of Moses says that you don't work on the Sabbath. Okay, fair enough. Day of rest. And they say, well, Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath.

Now, of course, it's a question of interpretation, isn't it? Is healing somebody work? Now, Jesus would say, no, it's doing good. And you certainly, even in the law of Moses, you do good on the Sabbath.

And I think Jesus actually goes further and he will transform the Sabbath and fulfill the Sabbath. But even within Moses' own terms, doing good on the Sabbath is not unlawful.

[11:39] Anyway, that's just to notice, fly in the ointment, so to speak, here. The day he'd done it was a Sabbath. Therefore, the Pharisees also asked him, you notice the word?

They also asked him how he received his sight. Right, how did you receive your sight? How did this happen? To which the man answers, I was blind.

Jesus put mud on my eyes. I washed and now I see. Good for you. He's not being budged from this. Now then, some people are going to see this and other people are not going to see it.

Some of the Pharisees said, this man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath. But others asked, how? Notice the question again.

But how can a sinner do this sort of sign, these miraculous signs? So, some people say, yeah, he must be from God.

[12:57] That's what Nicodemus said, isn't it? No one, you are sent from God, no one could do the miraculous signs unless God were with him. And other people say, no, this can't be right.

This can't be right because our interpretation of the Sabbath means that Jesus is sinning and there is a division. Do you notice that? So they were divided.

There was a schisma. There was a schism, a split. And even now as I'm speaking, it's quite possible that some of you will be thinking, yeah, I'm with Jesus on this, 100%.

And others of you might be thinking, I don't really like what I'm hearing and the more I hear, the less I like it. Jesus does this, you see. He comes to bring crisis and here he is bringing division.

Some people are saying yes and other people are saying, no, no, not up for that. Verse 17, finally, they turned again to the blind man and said, what have you to say about him?

[14:03] It was your eyes he opened. That's a good question. What do you say? We might ask the question of ourselves. What do you say about Jesus? Well, they take this opportunity to ask the blind man, well, what do you say then?

Your eyes he opened. And the man presumably has thought a bit about this. And the more they've asked him the questions, the more he's thought about it.

And he says, verse 17, he is a prophet. That's interesting, isn't it? Because previously he said, when they asked him, he said, well, I don't know.

And that's as far as he could get. But he is now quoted as saying, I've got this far. Jesus is a prophet. He's a man sent from God.

He's a man who speaks from God. He is a prophet. Well, good for you. Verse 18, the Jews still didn't believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

[15:07] So let's bring in the man's parents. Whoops, wrong sheet. So more questions and answers.

This time, the man's parents. The man's parents have got a cloud of something around them, beginning with F, which we'll see in a moment. So the Jews summon them.

Right. Mr. and Mrs., whatever their name is. Verse 19. Is this your son? They asked, the one you say was born blind.

Well, he was born blind. And he is our son. Is this your son? The one you say was born blind. How is it that now he can see? See, they're being asked this question.

How? Well, the Jews don't believe. And they, they are still pressing this mistaken identity thing.

There's a mistake. Wrong, wrong, wrong child, wrong, wrong, wrong person, wrong, wrong man.

[16:18] And you say that he was born blind. So you're, it's not true, is it really? one's got a speck of dust in his eye when he was at school and had to be sent home early but he wasn't really born blind.

And then the question, how? So they ply on the questions and the parents answer, well, we know he is our son. You notice we know that. We know he is our son, his parents answered, and we know he was born blind.

We're not stupid. We know he's our son. We know he was born blind. But how and who, how he can see or who opened his eyes, we don't know.

Ask him. He's old enough. He can speak for himself. Now, why did his parents say that? Well, you know, don't you? Because they were frightened.

They faced fear of rejection. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.

[17 : 33] That's why his parents said he is of age. Ask him. So we bring into this interrogation thing a climate of fear and a fear of rejection.

And I have to say that that is part and parcel of what we're into when Jesus comes into people's lives.

He asks us to take sides. He asks us to stick our necks out. He asks us to confess, to profess, to take a stand.

And some people won't like it. And the parents are saying, I'm sorry. Sorry, son. But we're not going to back you in this.

We're not up for confessing Jesus is the Christ. Do you see that? Do you see that they, the implication is they could have gone further. But his mum and dad say, no, no, no, no, not too keen on this.

[18 : 34] And out of fear, they back off. And I want to say that maybe that's something that you'll find at work in your life. Maybe your parents, maybe your brothers and sisters, maybe your cousins, maybe your workmates, maybe the people that you have previously looked up to, will put pressure on you not to confess that Jesus is the Christ.

And you will be in fear. And I'm sorry, I can't, either from the text or from any other thing in the Bible, say that will just go away.

Because it won't. It's part of the cost of following Jesus. He says, I want you to take a stand and it will cost you, but I'm worth it. So think on that.

Let's follow, let's follow this through in the verse 24. So the Pharisees say, bring back the man who's been born blind. And we'll see some of the quality of their argument now.

So the Pharisees and the man, version two, or stage two. So I think the Pharisees are getting irate at this point.

[19 : 52] Let's see what happens. They say, okay, sit down there. Now, give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner.

Notice they know that. Interesting. I wonder where they got that from. Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner. Where does give glory to God come from? I don't know whether you know your Bible well enough.

They're quoting something in the Old Testament. Do you know where somebody says to somebody, give glory to God, own up, tell us the truth?

Achan. It was Joshua who said it and he said it to Achan. Achan was the man who by his secret sin completely messed things up for the nation of Israel.

Do you remember that he'd stolen some loot and he was told to destroy it but he'd stolen it and hidden it and because of him disaster came on the nation and the Pharisees are quoting that and they're saying we don't want you to be the cause, you and this person who supposedly opens blind eyes to be the cause of ruin on our nation.

[21 : 16] You traitor. You, you know, we want to get rid of you. This is what they're saying. This is the ideas that they're drawing on. Give glory to God.

We know this man is a sinner and the man born blind is absolutely brilliant. He's absolutely brilliant. Look what he says. Verse 25.

Well, whether he's a sinner or not, I don't know but one thing I do know, I was blind and now I see. So, it's, if one might use this expression, put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Just think that one through. You know, you're so clever but I can tell you I was blind and now I see and you're not budging me from that and that's the truth. That's a fact.

And we've got to live in the real world. Not what you just think would be convenient to you. I was blind and now I see. So, they go back to the same questions as before.

[22 : 20] What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? How did, you know, it can't possibly be true unless we can understand it. Very scientific, aren't they?

Very modern in that sense. What did he do? No, what's the trick? How did he do it? Explain it.

We're not going to believe it unless we have everything explained to us. Very modern.

And the man gives us a brilliant answer. He says, well, I've told you already and you didn't listen. Do you want to hear it again?

Do you want to become his disciples too? It's wonderful sarcasm, isn't it? It's absolutely brilliant. So, they're all ganging up on him. We know this man's a sinner and how did he do it?

He says, well, I've told you and you didn't listen. You want to become disciples too, do you? And then, you can see the quality of their argument because they insult him and they hurl insults at him.

[23 : 23] You miserable little, you know, whatever they would have said. Insult isn't a very high quality argument, is it? It's not very reasoning, is it?

It's not actually very scientific. But this is, this is, this is what they now are forced into or this is, this is the only step that they can think of to take next.

They hurled insults at him. You are this fellow's disciple. We are disciples of Moses. So they bring Moses back into it again and they try to drive a wedge between Jesus, who is actually the fulfilment of all the scriptures about whom Moses spoke, and Moses, whom they claim to follow.

We are disciples of Moses. We know, notice they know this, we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from.

With the implication, we're so clever and we're so important that if we don't know, it can't be worth knowing. Do you see that, the implication? If we don't give you permission to, if we don't endorse this, then you're an absolute idiot if you believe this.

[24 : 35] It's actually very modern, isn't it? we don't even know where he comes from.

And we've got yet more fantastic replies to come from the man. And he uses a word for something that's astonishing or a wonder, and he says, well, well, well, that is marvellous, isn't it?

You don't know where he comes from and yet he opened my eyes. You've written him off as being in the margins of insignificance, but he can open people's eyes.

Who's got the right hand, who's got the right end of the stick, I wonder. What a marvellous thing it is, you wonderful Pharisees. You don't know where he comes from yet he opens his eyes.

Now we do know things. We know that God does not listen to sinners. We know that he listens to the godly man who does his will. So I think we can draw from that.

[25 : 46] You could quibble with the man's logic. You could say, well, God answers the prayers of sinners by his grace. But I think the man's logic is still strong.

He's saying, God is showing his approval of this man, isn't he? That's what he's saying. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. This man has God's approval.

Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. It's never been done before. It just doesn't happen. It is an impossibility.

It is a miracle. It is unique. It is of such stature and status. You can't just write it off.

This man is from God. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. So he's now reached this conclusion.

[26 : 49] He is from God. And the Pharisees say to him, well that's very reasonable. We hadn't thought about that. We will consider this matter very carefully and give you a written reply within five working days.

Now they don't say that. They say, you idiot. You complete imbecile. You were steeped in sin at birth. Look at you. How dare you lecture us.

Get out. And they threw him out. Not very reasoning, is it? Not very compassionate. And strong stuff. You were completely born in sin.

So they're referring back to his blindness, aren't they? They're tacitly acknowledging that he was born blind. blind. And they're drawing on the idea that if you're born blind, you're born in sin.

And he, and they, they won't, they're not willing to learn. They're not the people who are willing to listen to advice. They say, how dare you lecture us.

[28 : 01] Well, he wasn't lecturing them. He was just giving them common sense, wasn't he? And they expel him. They threw him out, which is what his parents were afraid of. But this is what happens to him.

They threw him out. Let's follow it through to a conclusion. Now, Jesus comes and speaks to the man. It is true that Jesus also asks him questions.

Though I think it would also be true to say the questions are not hostile and they are not demeaning. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and he said, do you believe in the Son of Man?

I can imagine the man wandering around and Jesus coming up next to him and saying, do you believe in the Son of Man? And Jesus, and the man asking his question, who is he, sir?

The man asked, tell me so that I may believe in him. Let's just see what we've been doing. We've been following through how blind eyes see.

[29 : 09] Jesus is the light of the world and he's opened the man's eyes in the physical and medical sense right at the beginning of the chapter. But what we're following through is how, if I can say spiritually, he comes to see.

And this process is a lot more drawn out and hasn't yet finished. And if you follow the man, he's worked from, first of all, spiritual question about Jesus, I don't know.

Then, what do you make of Jesus? He's a prophet. prophet. And then, further on, he's from God.

And now Jesus is going to bring everything, click everything into place for him.

Do you believe in the Son of Man? Do you believe in the Son of Man? Do you have faith in the Son of Man? Who is he, sir? The man asked.

Tell me so that I may believe in him. I'm open. I want to know. I haven't yet got everything clicked into place, but I can see the Pharisees are just making things worse.

[30 : 16] They haven't got it. You tell me so that it will all click into place for me. Tell me so that I may believe. And Jesus says, you have now seen him.

In fact, he is the one speaking with you. And the man says, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

That's the moment that the man really sees. He could see with his physical eyes all the way through the chapter, but he's been sort of struggling to clear his eyes as the chapter's gone through.

And now he can see. Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. And that's the place that he gets to. And that's exactly the right place to come to. The lordship of Jesus, you are lord. You're the boss.

You're the master.

[31 : 22] What you say, I will do. Lord. And then it's faith, I believe. I take you at your word.

I'm not going to dig in my heels asking for proof. I'm not going to keep on objecting and asking lots of questions. I have settled this. I'm going to trust you. And he worshipped him.

And that attitude of worship, I know in the Bible, it can have connotations that are more or less. It can simply be politeness. But in this case, it's more than that, isn't it?

It's saying, I fall down before you and honor you. I'm here to worship you. That's what I want to do. That's what I want my life to be.

Lord, I believe. I worship. This is the moment that the man sees. Now, do you see?

[32 : 24] Have you yet come through this process, whatever it might be in your case, to the point where you can honestly say, you're the Lord.

I believe you. I worship you. That's the point to get to. If you haven't got there yet, please be encouraged.

I'll say a little bit more about it. It's a process. And you might be somewhere along that line. Well, just keep on going. Remember what the man did. He stuck to the things he knew for sure.

He didn't allow himself to be knocked off course by people intimidating him, threatening to reject him, trying to undermine him.

He stuck to the things that he knew were true and worked on through them until this point that he could see it all clearly. That's a good advice for anybody who's seeking things spiritually.

[33 : 21] Now, how does this fit with Jesus? Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is the one who brings crisis into people's lives.

And it's going on to say in the next chapter, Jesus is the good shepherd. We'll think about that in just a moment. But the man could say, previously he said, I was blind, but now I see.

He could say that physically and I think now he can say it spiritually. I once was lost and now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. I'm going to sing that song in a moment.

Let me give you a couple of observations then from John 9. number one. Number one. There has always been persecution. It's part and parcel.

There's no such thing as Christianity without this principle, whether it's very strongly at work or just behind the scenes.

[34 : 25] the neighbours complained about him. His family abandoned him. The authorities put pressure on him and insulted him and rejected him.

Persecution is not unexpected. Persecution is not deserved. He didn't go out of his way to annoy people. Please don't go out of your way to annoy people. Proper persecution is not deserved. He didn't seek it. He just sought to be true and to be honest and have integrity. But what I want to say is this persecution in this chapter is used by God because I don't think he would have come to the conclusions he came to if he hadn't had this pressure of people asking him questions that he had to work through.

Do you see what I'm trying to say here? All these verses from verse 8 down to verse 37 these verses of pressure and what do you think about it?

They might have given the guy sleepless nights. They might have really set him thinking. They might have set him praying. But it's a process that God used for good to bring him through to faith.

[35 : 42] That's one thing. Second observation. Do you notice who isn't much in the chapter? Jesus. Because until we get right to the end, Jesus is absent or apparently absent.

Where is Jesus in all this? See I think, this is my theory, that he was actually at work all the time. There is a theological motif which I think was invented by Luther called the theology of the cross in Latin.

Luther looked at the cross and said, just tell me, where is God in this? And if you look at the cross, you see Jesus crucified, humiliated, disgraced.

where is God? Doesn't seem to be there at all. Why doesn't God come down and save him? Doesn't seem to do anything.

God seems to be totally absent. It's almost endorsed by Jesus saying, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And Luther says, look at that scene at the cross, it seems that God is absent.

[37 : 16] But in fact, but in fact, that is the one incident in this world's history where God was most at work, where God was most present.

That is the work of God, the glory of God, the amazing hand of God. And Luther says, it doesn't just apply to the cross.

Where God seems to be most absent, there he is most present. I think it applies to this incident or this part of this guy's life.

Jesus as shepherd, Jesus as light of the world, Jesus as the cause and trigger of division. I think Jesus is abundantly present in these verses.

I think he's working as it were behind the scenes. Well, that's what I think, I don't know whether you agree with me or not, but we do get to, now Jesus does come visibly onto the scene and notice he seeks out the man.

[38 : 29] He found him. You can imagine Jesus dodging through the alleyways and looking for him. There he is, there he is, hold on, oh no, he's gone again. There he is, right?

Do you believe in the son of man? He found him. Jesus, seems characteristic of Jesus, doesn't it, to go out and find people, to go out and find people.

If you feel that you are lost, first, I would advise you to cry out to Jesus, come and find me because Jesus is very good at finding people.

He found this man and then he clarified the issue for him. Tell me who he is, sir. Tell me so that I may believe in him and Jesus does clarify it for him.

You've seen him. In fact, he's the one speaking with you. I believe, says the man.

[39 : 30] I do. Lord, I believe and worship. And then comes a sting in the tail. Jesus comment, for judgment I have come into this world.

I've come to bring this sort of crisis into people's lives. I've come so that the blind will see. And here you are, blind man, you now see.

You now see, not only in the medical sense, but most importantly in the spiritual sense. I've come and you who are blind see. And maybe you could say that for yourself.

The Lord came once I was blind, but now I see. But Jesus says, and I've also come that those who see will become blind.

Now what does he mean by that bit? I think he's referring to the Pharisees and they ask him, do you mean us? Are we blind? Verse 40. And Jesus says, if you were blind you would not be guilty of sin, but now you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

[40 : 42] It's rather a bit of a conundrum, isn't it? But do you notice that the Pharisees were the one who through this process got harder and harder? They said, we know, we know this man's a sinner.

And the man kept on saying, well hang on a minute, he can't be right because I'm standing here as living proof. I was blind, he put mud on my eyes, I washed and now I see.

I mean you're not listening, are you? But the Pharisees said, no we know. And they end up, instead of changing their own opinions, condemning the man, insulting him and rejecting him.

Do you see? They've become more hard. Even the little that they had has been taken away. And they're the people who see, I think Jesus is using what they would say about themselves, as the Bible so often does.

You claim you can see and you've ended up blind. You've ended up not seeing something that was staring you in the face. And it's a hardening process.

[41 : 49] And I want again to plead with you really, don't get hard. Don't harden your hearts.

Don't take the next step away from Jesus instead of towards him. Don't be blown off course. Don't be intimidated.

Don't be pushed away towards the Pharisees way of doing it. Well, how does this all happen? But here's the wonderful work that Jesus does.

The blind are enabled to work through the claims of Jesus and they see. So in the crisis of us listening today, which way are we going to go?

How do we react then to the crisis of Jesus? So let me answer that by putting words in our mouths as we sing this last song.

[42 : 52] ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending ending