

John 9:1-41

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[0 : 00] The scripture text is John chapter 9 on page 992. As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth, and his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

Jesus answered, it was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day.

Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva.

Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which means sent. So he went and washed and came back seeing.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, Is this not the man who used to sit and beg? Some said, It is he. Others said, No, but he is like him.

[1 : 10] He kept saying, I am the man. So they said to him, Then how were your eyes opened? He answered, The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash.

So I went and washed and received my sight. They said to him, Where is he? He said, I do not know. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, He put mud on my eyes and I washed and I see.

Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath. But others said, How can a man who is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, What do you say about him since he has opened your eyes? He said, He is a prophet. The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, Is this your son who you say was born blind?

[2 : 24] How then does he now see? His parents answered, We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees, we do not know. Nor do we know who opened his eyes.

Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself. His parents said these things because they feared the Jews. For the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

Therefore, his parents said, He is of age. Ask him. So for the second time, they called the man who had been blind and said to him, Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.

He answered, Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. They said to him, What did he do to you?

How did he open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples? And they reviled him, saying, You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

[3 : 29] We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from. The man answered, Why, this is an amazing thing. You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.

We know that God does not listen to sinners. But if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. They answered him, You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out.

And having found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man? He answered, And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him? Jesus said to him, You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.

He said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him. Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.

[4 : 37] Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, Are we also blind? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say we see, your guilt remains.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Amen. It's a joy to be together this morning.

As we get underway, let's pause briefly for prayer. Father, we are approaching your word, your word that is both living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to separate joints and marrow, divide the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

And Father, we pray in these next moments that your word would be wielded well. But more importantly, that your word would grab hold of all of us who sit, that we may be people who are changed through it.

We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Karma. Karma. The principle that follows the lines of cause and effect.

[6 : 25] It is the belief that one's present actions and intentions have an effect or influence on future outcomes.

Good deeds and good intentions lead to a good outcome, usually happiness. It's an idea imported from Eastern religions, primarily Hinduism or Buddhism, pertaining to rebirths and new life.

If individuals led good lives, they would experience reincarnation to a new form, a better form. While living with a Buddhist family in Asia during the summers of my middle school years, I experienced the instruction of this principle of karma.

I had come across a cockroach. Being raised in North America, the heroic thing to do is to obliterate it. Smash it.

Crush it. Discard it. Ignite it. Whatever it took. Get rid of it. Of which I did. In the North American context, I would be a hero.

[7 : 41] Not so much with my Taiwanese host family. Why? Though it's a detestable form, the cockroach, it was inhabited by a poor soul.

The moral of the story was, don't kill the cockroach, lest you become one. Reincarnation. Karma.

And our text this morning opens up with this similar attitude. I would be cautious calling it karma. I would be cautious calling it karma, but it certainly has a ring of cause and effect. We know in Judaism there are texts where the children bear the sins of their fathers.

In Exodus and Deuteronomy. And in coming upon a blind man, the disciples who have been absent for the last two chapters pose a question to Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. Whose fault is it that this man is blind? Who sinned? The Bible asked.

[8 : 48] His parents or the man? Neither is Jesus' reply. He affirms the Bible in that suffering is not necessarily directly correlated to actions.

Suffering is far more complex than the question you're asking. It's far more complex than simple cause and effect. We know that from stories like Job.

And from this question emerges probably one of the most elaborate, if not the most elaborate narration in John's Gospel. It is not only the most captivating narrative account.

It is certainly the most compelling picture of a life of darkness brought to life under the light of Jesus. Jesus has already been declared the light of the world according to John chapter 8. John chapter 8 was John's instruction on Jesus being the light of the world. And now in John chapter 9, John wants to say, let me show you the demonstration of Jesus being the light of the world.

[9 : 58] This morning, we will see Jesus, the light of the world, doing the works of God, displayed in a human life.

We ambitiously are undertaking the entirety of the chapter, but I hope you will be able to follow along on how it unfolds. My undertaking this morning is to show you four things.

And the movement of text runs along these four lines. There is a divine interruption. A divine interruption. And it's followed by human interrogation.

Human interrogation. It culminates in a messianic identification. And it concludes with this lasting implication.

Interruption, interrogation, identification, implication. Jesus is the light of the world. And he is now shining the works of God.

[11 : 04] On this day, the life of the man born blind would experience, he would experience a divine interruption. A beggar's life lived at the mercy of others would now become a believing life that causes others to marvel.

A life that was socially dismissed and outcasted by many would now become the spectacular display before all. Jesus doesn't answer the question, the theodicy question, the question everyone asks.

How evil and suffering find its way into humanity. Instead, he chooses to heal the individual. It's an act entirely uninitiated by the blind man.

Did you notice that? There's no recorded dialogue. There's no demonstration of faith. There's no public outcry. Instead, John records for us an act that is entirely Jesus' initiative.

And here is the great divine interruption. This is the unforeseen and unpredictable intrusion of God into someone's life. As Jesus fulfills this commission to work, to do the works of God, He takes this man's life and makes it a stage for the drama of redemption.

[12 : 23] Jesus does something quite odd, doesn't He? Spitting on the dirt, fashioning mud, and rubbing it into a man's eyes and commissions him to go wash in a pool.

Historians have noted that in those days there was this belief that human saliva had healing qualities. Theologians have noted that it is very similar to the Genesis 2 creation account.

You might recall that. Where God, the Creator, fashions Adam out of the dirt. Commentators have noted that Jesus has not healed in a way like this before in comparison in account of the other Gospels.

And whether there is a significance in the manner in which He was healed is up for debate. But what we cannot miss is its meaning.

The man who is blind at birth in verse 1 has now come back seen in verse 7. What does it mean? It means that the lofty projections of the entirety of the Old Testament, of the dawning of a new age, have now been fulfilled.

[13 : 39] Isaiah tells us, has long announced the coming of an age when not only the deaf hear, but out of their gloom, Isaiah 29 reads, and the dark and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see.

Isaiah also foretells of this individual who comes and he's a light to the nations to open the eyes that are blind. It means that God was interrupting the downward spiral of the human condition and acting decisively.

Now follow this closely. Suffering is tragic. And it is horrific. But according to this text, it is not irreparable.

Amen. According to this text, that though there is evil, though there is suffering, though the demonic presence in our world is so heavy and oppressive, John says, there's an out.

It is not irreversible. It is not the final word. That which cripples humanity does not have the final say. It means that that which befalls you and I and leaves us broken and in shambles and begging for mercy is not irredeemable.

[14 : 58] The Bible will not present you a thorough explanation of why this happens. It will not tell you how this happened, but it will tell you this, that in God's economy, that when suffering and evil do take place, God can act.

God can act. God can act. And at a minimum, what this text shows is somehow it can be reversed. The man was tragically and sorrowfully born blind, but he was mercifully and triumphantly born again. Is this not what you and I want in life?

Is this not what all humanity craves and yearns for? Is this not what offends and horrifies you as you read the news and you desire a change?

What can be done about all this? And the Bible presents for you and I the possibility of things being made new.

[16 : 07] And for so many of us, as we walk into this room, I don't know all the circumstances, but I can confidently say that there are circumstances that have fallen on our lives that we're asking the question, why?

How did my life end up in this manner? I can't tell you the why, but I can tell you that light has broken into the darkness, the light of the Lord Jesus, and he can interrupt and change the course of all things.

The work of Jesus is so astounding, so inconceivable, so unbelievable. As a result, the formerly blind man becomes a subject of an interrogation.

No one believes it. You see that, right? After the divine interruption, there's a human interrogation. It is so stunning that the neighbors have resorted to saying, that's not the man.

I've seen him begging for mercy. I've given him substance for survival. It is not the man. It is impossible for that to be the man.

[17:25] The Pharisees don't believe it. It can't be the man. Where's mom and dad? Get mom and dad. Get mom and dad. Mom, dad, is this your son? Yeah, that's...

No, no, no, no. It can't be. Impossible. Let's summon him again. Tell the story again. Now for the fourth time. How did this happen? It's unbelievable.

And John wants to convey two things in all these interrogations that run from verse 8 to 34. I know a huge chunk. There's two questions that are being asked.

How did this happen? How? How, how, how, how? Tell me the trick. Is this... How is this done? You see it in the ESV. Verse 10.

Verse 15. Verse 16. Verse 19. Verse 21. Verse 26. The question is how. The second question, more importantly, is who?

[18:24] Who did this to you? Verse 11, 16, 21, 29, and 30. And in all of this, the man surprisingly stays true to his account.

He repeatedly affirms that Jesus made mud, anointed his eyes, and sent him to the pool to wash, and he came back seen.

He doesn't know much, but what he does know, in verse 29, he was once blind, and now he sees. And he affirms this over, and over, and over, again.

And in order that we don't get misled while asking the how, John wants to remind us that the who is more significant. Let me put it this way.

The how is relative. I mean, Jesus, we know, could have just simply said, go, wash, you'll see.

[19:32] He could have simply said, do you want a new life? Snapped his fingers, and he could have seen. He could have put on a spectacular show, a spectacular spectacle,!

To entertain the crowd, but he didn't. He could have done it any way he wanted. So the how, I would argue, is not that significant.

What is significant is the who. The how is relative. The who is fixed. How does Jesus do something?

That's his divine prerogative. But the issue at hand is it is Jesus who's doing this. The modern mind is so fixated on the miracle and the manner at which it happened and it has completely missed the man who made it happen.

Because it is the man that is the point of contention. Yes, there was this, the first interrogation with the Pharisees was, this man, he worked on the Sabbath.

[20:58] He not only spit, but he stirred. And then he healed. Although those are at least three Sabbath violations. At least. But the text wants us to focus not on the how, but on the who.

you see that. Because Jesus is the topic of the interrogation. The subject of the interrogation is the man, the blind man. He's under fire.

But it's all about Jesus. You'll notice the entire conversation is about Jesus.

Verse 11. How did this happen to you? Well, this is what I did. The man called Jesus made mud. Well, the Pharisees, no, no, no, he's a sinner. He can't do these signs according to verse 16. He can't be from God according to verse 16. We have no idea where he comes from.

[22:03] Verse 29. Oh, no, no, no, but he's a prophet. The healed blind man says. He's a man from God according to verse 33. It's worthwhile to know that the man knows, the healed man knows actually very little about Jesus.

But he is convinced that it is Jesus who's made him well. One writer has put it helpfully this way.

The interrogation of the formerly blind man is a battle of knowledge.

knowledge. How does one know what one knows? How could one be sure of what one knows? And interestingly, following last Sunday, we had an undergraduate university luncheon, and there I heard one of our students share openly that they have a sociology professor who readily admits

that they don't know what is true.

On the one hand, that's a bit alarming, given the role of the position of this individual. Yet on the other hand, there is a sense of intellectual honesty and humility, that human knowledge can be contested and disputed.

And this is what is unfolding in these interrogations. Let me point it out. It's a battle of knowledge. His parents assert what they know. We know this is our son.

[23 : 22] But they don't know when it comes to Jesus. In verses 20 and 21, they defer to the healed blind man out of fear. The Pharisees are increasingly confident.

We know that this man is a sinner. The formerly blind man says, I actually don't know about that. But let me tell you what I do know.

That I was once blind, but now I see. And the battle of knowledge comes to a hedge in verse 27. The formerly blind man, with a bit of humor, seemingly annoyed at the Pharisees disbelief. in a bit of sarcasm, well, that's how I read it, why this is an amazing thing. You say, why, 30, the man answered, why this is an amazing thing.

You do not know, know, where he comes from. Yet he opened my eyes. We know God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.

[24 : 32] Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. You see, this is the battle over knowledge. When the work of God takes place in someone else's life, it's always confronted by skepticism.

God did what? Really? Is that even possible? At this level? There is skepticism from neighbors, from colleagues, from friends, even loved ones.

In recent days, and some of you will pick up on this, arguably one of the most renowned contemporary artists have professed the Christian faith. skepticism.

I don't believe it. Let's interview his wife, which they've done. Let's interview his pastor, which they've done.

Let's interview his entourage, which they've done. They've interviewed them all. Why? Because it cannot be true that he was born again.

[25 : 50] It's unbelievable. Right? Because it's impossible, the world says. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot comprehend it.

As a result, this individual, the formerly blind man, is discredited, silenced, and shut out. You see, the testimony of a Christian, let me say, is, people have said, oh, this is like the template of Christian belief.

Maybe. But what it does show us is this, that the testimony of a Christian is both through the work of God and the word of God.

It is a professed in the word, and it's demonstrated by the work. In the blind man's case, what we see is the work actually preceded the word. There are two sides of the same coin.

They both will happen in a transformed life. In preparation for this message, I came across this fascinating story of an English minor who was converted under the revivals of the Wesley brothers in England.

[27 : 02] So great was the change that his fellow workers would often just chide him mercilessly at lunchtime. And one day they jest, they kind of corner him and say, you don't believe that Jesus turned water into wine, do you?

And the man replied, similar to this healed blind man, well, I don't know if Jesus actually changed the water into wine. I wasn't there. And he replied in this way, but one thing I do know, in my house, Jesus changed beer into furniture.

And the story, it encapsulates what's taking place here. Perhaps an undereducated minor, or perhaps a nobody on the side of the street, perhaps someone who is crippled in all forms of life. the Lord takes hold of them. And maybe they can't give you the most comprehensive explanation of faith, but they can tell you what they do know.

The Lord does change lives. And I know some of it in this room may be unconvinced of Jesus' claims, but in your explanation of the world, you must have a sensible response to why there are those who devote themselves to Jesus.

[28 : 35] There are simply too many Christians to have this pharisaical answer and say, oh, he's just laughable. This is laughable. This is insensible. Just drive him out.

These are foolish people. But that's not the case, is it? That for those of you who have yet to come to faith in the Lord Jesus, you have fellow colleagues at the university, you have fellow co-workers downtown, you have fellow neighbors who are reasonable.

Therefore, you must, in your scheme of things, how do you explain a transformed life?

You must explain it. Thirdly, there's a messianic identification. It's staggering. the religious community cast them out.

It's incredibly ironic. Never since the world began has anyone heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. Nowhere in the entirety of the Old Testament is there an account of a blind man being healed.

[29 : 48] This man is healed, reviled, and cast out. In the great irony of things, he should have been the pride of the religious community. His life is the declaration that God is still at work.

That God had not forgotten Israel. The God of Israel has not neglected his people, yet the religious reject the very work of God in their presence.

And in his rejection, he is found by Jesus. in verse 35, the dialogue between the two is brief, but John only needs to get one point across.

Do you believe? Who is he, sir, that I may believe? Results in, Lord, I believe.

What Jesus is going for is belief. The work of God that the gospel has shown us earlier in previous chapters, is belief. Jesus discloses himself to the healed man.

[30 : 57] Jesus identifies himself, and in so doing receives the only acceptable response. The only place up to this point in John's gospel where Jesus takes on worship.

This man not merely confessed, admired, or respected, or saluted, but worshipped Jesus. This chapter alone has moved us from verse two, Jesus being a rabbi, to verse 38, Jesus being the Christ.

There's so much beauty in verse 37. Notice Jesus is saying, who is he?

Well, you have seen him to a formerly blind man. man. The once blind man from birth, being able to see for possibly just a short few days, was now beholding the most splendid sight one's eyes could possibly behold, the Lord Jesus himself.

The man didn't need a theological treatise to convince him. He was eager to give his life to the Lord Jesus who gave him life. For the first time in the gospel, Jesus is a recipient of rightful worship.

[32 : 14] He is not simply the instrument or the means of divine work in the world. He is the recipient of divine worship in the world. It is John's way of saying the Son of Man in verse 35 is the Son of God in verse 37.

And you and I properly identify Jesus and the eyes of one's heart are unblinded. The response is belief, adulation, adoration, and worship.

There is a divine interruption followed by a human interrogation, a messianic identification. And let me close with this.

There is a lasting implication. A lasting implication. 39 to 41. The text ends with incisive words from Jesus.

It appears that Jesus had found the formerly blind man in a crowd in public because the verbal exchange was overheard by those who stood by, particularly the Pharisees.

[33 : 22] And in verse 39, Jesus pronounces that He had come to the world to exercise judgment. It actually goes against the grain of John chapter 3 where He says He has not come to condemn the world, but to save the world.

And what can this mean? it means this, that the very existence of the light of the world, Jesus' very existence brings judgment.

His work by nature has this divisive effect. For it compels men and women to declare themselves to be either for or against Him.

The life of Christ is a pronouncement of judgment to an unbelieving world. Therefore, when you and I live these transformed lives, by nature they will offend.

And I pose this question, is there something offensive about your Christian life that others are offended by?

[34 : 28] Have you chosen to live in a way of such great holiness, of purity, of quality, of speech, that actually offends the watching world?

I'm not summoning you to be disruptive of society at large, but there certainly should be a distinction. And there are words from someone I can never forget.

It was in high school. I was, I saw myself as a Christian on fire. Not literally on fire, but passionate for the Lord.

And through the grapevine, a Jewish friend of mine, through another friend, had said, Bing, Christian?

I don't think so. Doesn't live like one. God. And I can never forget those words. Because it came from the lips of an unbelieving friend.

[35 : 37] And what, as we wind down, the charge is there are, if the transformed life of God is to be somehow offensive, there are opportunities to live that way.

You have a midterm tomorrow, and you're going to Bible study? It's worth one-third of our grade. Why would you do that?

It's Saturday night. We're going to go watch this 11.30 p.m. showing of a movie, and you're not going to come?

because you have to go to bed? Because you have church the next morning? Why would you do that? You spend how much money on counseling?

Your marriage is over. Give up on her. Start on you. Wait, what? You made a covenant before God?

[36 : 50] Why would you do that? life? Because a life, a transformed life, under the governing and the ruling of the Lord Jesus Christ, will offend.

Will offend. As you and I bear witness to the world, the effects are yielded in the realities of verse 40 and 41. Some will say you're totally brainwashed.

This is the biggest waste of your time and your life. And that affirms their perpetual blindness and their enduring guilt before God. Others will be winsomely won over and convinced that they are blind and in so doing find themselves seeing and believing guilt-free and pardoned.

the obsession of the text is for the religious leaders to make Jesus out to be a sinner. The burden of the text is to show the reader that Jesus is the Savior of sinners.

And this is the Lord Jesus that offers you and I a splendid reversal. He is extending to you unrivaled light. In the same way, the earth and all of her inhabitants would cease to exist without that giant star the sun above.

[38 : 16] The Bible is declaring that there is a greater sun. One that eclipses the light of even our own sun. There is no more powerful star at least that I know I'm sure there might be than the sun in our solar system.

I know that if we weaponized everything we could and launched it at the sun, it would continue to shine uninterrupted. Yet the Bible speaks of a day when the sun above will be swallowed up, will no longer exist.

It will be swallowed up by the sun enthroned where there is a city that needs no sun or lamp or light because Lord Jesus Christ radiates and will continue to be the light of life to all who believe.

Father, we come to you this morning and it is quite astounding that you have taken uninitiated on seemingly so many times uninitiated