

Lord, I Believe

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[0 : 00] All right, well, this morning we come to the finale of this story in John that we've been looking at over the past couple weeks. We heard of how Jesus healed a man who was born blind, and it was an amazing sign that Jesus is indeed the light of the world, the one who enables us to see, the revealer of truth.

And we heard about the various reactions of people to this miracle. Some of those who knew him when he was blind and was a beggar were astounded. Others simply couldn't believe that this was the same guy.

And then last Sunday we heard how they finally took this man who had been blind to the Pharisees, and we heard their reaction to all this. We're in John chapter 9.

They were divided. Some of them were trying to make a case that Jesus can't be from God because he made mud to heal this man's eyes. He made mud on the Sabbath, and that's work.

Others thought differently. Why would God work this great sign through Jesus if Jesus was not a righteous man, if he was sinning even in the act of doing it?

[1 : 14] And the Pharisees questioned the man's parents, and then they questioned the man himself again and again and again. They were just looking for some way to invalidate this miracle or to discredit Jesus.

And we heard last Sunday how finally the man had enough, and he let the Pharisees know what he was really thinking. And then we heard how the Pharisees let him have it and kicked him out of the synagogue.

Well, let's hear the rest of the story this morning from John chapter 9, verse 35. 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. So Jesus actually goes and finds this man, and when he finds him, he asks him this question, Do you believe in the Son of Man?

And I think to really appreciate this question, we kind of have to put ourselves back there in the story. This man is a Jewish man living in a Jewish place. And so this question probably hit him differently than it hits us.

[2 : 34] He probably already has some ideas, some things that he's heard about what the Son of Man was. Not only that, but Jesus probably knew what this man already understood of the Son of Man.

Either he knew it how he knew all sorts of things about people, or he knew it simply by talking to him before he came to ask this question. And we don't know exactly what the man understood, but he probably understood the Son of Man at the very least to refer to the Messiah.

Most people back then and there had some conception of who the Messiah would be, or at least what he would be like when he came. We saw that with the woman at the well in John chapter 4.

Maybe this man even knew of the words of the prophet Daniel, spoken hundreds of years before. Daniel chapter 7, verse 13 and 14.

In that passage, Daniel describes a vision that he received from God. He says, In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

[3 : 48] He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power.

All nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. And his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

What an amazing vision that was. I don't know whether the man was thinking of this particular passage, but probably at the least he thought that the Son of Man was the Messiah.

God's promised, chosen king. The great one that many in Israel had been longing for to finally come. So Jesus says to him, Do you believe in the Son of Man?

And Jesus probably isn't asking him if he believes in the idea of the Son of Man. This is not like the question that we often hear directed to children.

[4 : 52] You know, do you believe in Santa Claus? Or do you believe in the tooth fairy? Jesus doesn't mean it like that. He's not saying, Do you believe that the Son of Man is real?

Of course he's real. Jesus has already referred to himself many times as the Son of Man. Probably what Jesus means is something more like, Do you have faith in the Son of Man?

Do you trust the Son of Man? And the man says in response, Who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.

So this man already believes that there is a Son of Man, there is a special one, a Messiah, and, judging by his answer, that he's already come. He probably believes that the one who opened his eyes is that one, the Son of Man, the Messiah.

No doubt he's probably learned a few things about Jesus secondhand through his interrogation by the Pharisees. But let's remember that in this man's last encounter with Jesus, he was blind.

[6 : 05] And so at this point, he is probably not even certain about just who he's talking to. And so he asked Jesus, Well, who is the Son of Man? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.

It's like he's saying, Well, if you're talking to Jesus, he doesn't know his name, if you're talking about who I think you're talking about, the one who opened my eyes, I'm ready to put my faith in him.

I'm ready to put my trust in him. I'm ready to become one of his followers. You remember, that's what the Pharisees had said to this man. They accused him of being one of this man's followers.

And probably he was thinking after that, Well, yes, he opened my eyes. I want to become one of his followers. So who is he? Do you know him?

Jesus says to him, You have now seen him. He is the one speaking with you. Now, I don't know why Jesus refers to himself in the third person like this.

[7 : 12] It's kind of climactic. But he does. And he's basically saying, Where is you before? You hadn't seen him. Right now, you have. He's the one speaking with you right now.

I am the Son of Man. I am the one who opened your eyes. Verse 38. Then the man said, Lord, I believe.

And he worshipped him. I wish I could just hear what was going on in this man's thoughts in this moment. Maybe he already suspected that this guy was the one who had opened his eyes.

Maybe he thought he recognized his voice a little bit. But maybe wasn't certain. But as soon as Jesus tells him, I am the one. I am the Son of Man.

This man knows that he is the Messiah. He says, Lord, I believe. And he hits the deck.

[8 : 15] The word translated worshipped here is literally, he fell to the ground before him. There's some debate over whether he was worshipping Jesus as though Jesus was God, divine, or whether he fell down before him bowing in deep reverence as though Jesus is that great king of God's choosing, the Messiah.

And it's kind of a tricky decision because whenever that word translated worshipped here is used with reference to God, it means worshipped. And whenever it's used of earthly men, it means to bow reverently before them or to pay homage to them.

And in this case, Jesus is both God and man. But the man who was blind probably does not yet understand the full extent of who Jesus is, that he is, in fact, God here in front of him in human flesh.

So he falls down on the ground before him and he confesses, my Lord, my King, not just any king, but God's king, as he told the Pharisees.

I know that this man came from God. Look at what he did. Verse 39, Jesus said, for judgment I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

[9 : 56] Now, I don't know about you, but I have to admit that this is not what I expected Jesus to say next. I mean, this is kind of a joyful moment. Here's Jesus with this man on the ground before him.

This man has come to realize the truth and confess, yes, you are the Lord. You are my Messiah. And then Jesus says, for judgment I have come into this world so that those who are blind will see.

and those who see will become blind. If we just take a part of what Jesus says here, I mean, it kind of makes sense and it's joyful.

I have come into this world so that the blind will see. That's good news. That's exactly what Jesus did. He gave this blind man sight, the ability to see.

But then we keep listening to Jesus and he says, in the same breath, I have also come so that those who see will become blind. What's going on here?

[11 : 05] And for judgment I have come into this world. Why does Jesus say that? Well, as we'll see in a minute, there were also some Pharisees standing nearby watching all of this.

and by now it should be hopefully clear that Jesus is no longer talking simply about physical sight and physical blindness. He has a point to make that's deeper than that.

For judgment I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. That's what's just happened in this moment for the man.

It wasn't earlier, I mean earlier he was blind and he came to see physically but what just happened for him now is that he was blind spiritually and came to see the truth about Jesus.

And we know Jesus is speaking figuratively. Did Jesus just come into the world to give physical sight? to the physical blind?

[12 : 15] Physically blind? Well if we've been listening to Jesus over the past months we know that that falls way short of what Jesus has been saying. He has come to give life eternal life so that people would not perish so that they would not face the just wrath of God and be condemned but instead have life.

Another way to bring this out is just simply to ask what's the greater miracle here? What's the greater healing here? Is it that the man who is physically blind can now see with his physical eyes and now in some sense has a new life?

Or is it that the man who was spiritually lost and walking in darkness has now come to see and believe the truth that gives him eternal life?

We should celebrate that this man received one of the greatest miracles ever done. Sight after having lived his entire life blind but I hope that our celebration of that pales in comparison to what just happened to this man now.

he has just received something far greater something far more wonderful the ability to see spiritually and it's made all the difference in his life and in his eternity.

[13 : 51] I wonder do we have more excitement over someone being miraculously healed than over someone coming to repent and believe in Jesus and be saved?

Which is the greater miracle? Which part of this story should move us more deeply? The part where the man says I can see at the pool of Siloam or this part here where he says Lord I believe and hits the ground in front of Jesus.

Jesus came not simply to alleviate physical suffering and cure bodily ailments he came primarily to open the eyes of people who are spiritually blind and spiritually lost in darkness.

Jesus came to make this moment that's just happened for this man as he says Lord I believe he came to make that same moment happen not just for him but for many for you for me and for some in our community here in Davidson who right now are walking in spiritual darkness is that the miracle that you're asking God for these days let's consider now the other half of Jesus statement verse 39 for judgment I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind it's difficult to know just what Jesus means here when he says for judgment he doesn't mean punishment because that doesn't make sense for punishment

I have come into this world so that the blind will see well that doesn't make sense and he's not talking about the final judgment I mean we know from the rest of the story we know from other passages this isn't the final judgment that's coming so what does he mean well my best guess if I had to take a guess at it I would say that a part of judgment involves separating separating truth from lies separating the sheep from the goats those who are true from the imposters we make judgments about things all the time and when we do it involves separation we approve this news article as representing the truth and not this one separation and here we see a similar kind of thing there's an element of separation everyone is being exposed to Jesus to his teaching to his miracles and yet by God's sovereign purpose and plan this exposure is having a different result for different people it's the separating or the dividing of people and as

[17 : 08] Jesus ministry does this some like this man who are spiritually blind are coming to see and believe and know the truth but others are having a different result others who are seeing all that Jesus is doing hearing all that he's saying are becoming spiritually blind they're becoming more lost more guilty of sin because they're choosing to reject and turn away from the light of Jesus I think what Jesus says here is very similar to what he said to his disciples when he explained why he spoke to the crowds in parables maybe you remember that what Jesus said Matthew chapter 13 this is in the midst of the parable of the sower they asked him about why he speaks in parables and he said this is why I speak to them in parables though seeing they do not see he's quoting Isaiah here though hearing they do not hear or understand in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah you will be ever hearing but never understanding you will be ever seeing but never perceiving and we might wonder well how can you be ever seeing and never seeing never getting it how can you be continuously hearing what Jesus is saying and not understanding it how is that possible

Jesus tells us the answer still quoting Isaiah in the next verse he says for this people's heart has become calloused they hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes there it is they have closed their eyes there is a voluntary decision made on the part of the people that are seeing to close their eyes Jesus still quoting Isaiah says otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them Jesus had a distinct purpose in using parables in fact I think what he's telling us here is that his whole ministry has a distinct purpose these Pharisees have just seen what Jesus did in healing this blind man and they can't deny it they brought his parents in yes he is our son yes he was born blind how does he see we don't know

Jesus did it is what the man said and yet even with this sign clearly in front of them they are seeing it they're choosing to close their eyes I'm not going to accept the truth that this points to the seeing are becoming blind this is what's happening with the Pharisees right now I'm reminded of one of Jesus favorite passages to bring up in discussion with the Pharisees you probably know this one first Peter it's mentioned there the stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone said Jesus it's also a stone that causes some to stumble said Isaiah some trip over it they refuse to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah they reject him but the very same Jesus is also the corner stone the one on whom

God has chosen to build his house his people and again we see that idea of separation people having an opposite reaction and response to Jesus and his ministry and this is all happening in accordance with the ultimate plan of God for judgment for the purpose of judgment I have come into this world says Jesus so that in order that these outcomes would happen now it's not because God desires in his heart that some would be lost that some would become blind in his heart of hearts God does not desire that as we heard back in Matthew I want them to turn and I would heal them if they did they close their eyes no this happens according to the plan of

God because God desires that people should be separated and sifted out as they should be Jesus is like the sieve of God that has been sent to separate and sift out the people he is the stone put before them that will reveal one or the other outcome he is the light shining in the darkness that they will either come into the light or they will close their eyes and turn away from the light no I don't want that in other words I think what Jesus is really saying here is that at the end of the story when he the son of man is revealed in glory how people responded to Jesus when they had the opportunity that will be the basis for separating them out in the final judgment the separation is beginning even now as

[23 : 00] Jesus is here giving his words now we might wonder why does it have to be this way truthfully God has many purposes in all that he does and all of them good all of them right all of them just lots of them are beyond our understanding one of the things he spoke through Paul is that part of the reason he sent Jesus in this way to save us in this way is to humble the proud to shame the arrogant those who are wise in their own eyes to take away all opportunity for human boasting basically to put us all in our rightful place as creatures before him our creator that's at least one purpose so this is the moment of decision to those who humble themselves now before

Jesus admit that yes I am blind I can't see I am in need I am lost I have sinned against you God will you forgive me I believe in you Lord those who do will be saved but those who refuse to humble themselves those who persist in pride those who say no I can see just fine I am not lost I don't need you Jesus they will perish justly because they did see and yet closed their eyes verse 40 some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked what are we blind too a rhetorical question you can just hear the tone of mockery in it like are we blind too no

I don't think so and Jesus responds with this he says if you were blind you would not be guilty of sin but now that you claim you can see your guilt remains it's a loaded response this is one of those noodle busters you kind of just got to sit and think over this and meditate on it for a while in the same breath Jesus says no you're not blind and so you are guilty of sin and he says yes you are blind and so you are guilty of sin I know that sounds like a contradiction but it's there Jesus is speaking at a different level probably in riddle or kind of like a mini parable here let's unpack it briefly if you were blind in the original language based on the grammar here we can know the way that this if then statement works we know that it's if you were blind and you're not you would not be guilty of sin what does

Jesus mean by this I think what he means is if you were truly blind if you were truly ignorant of what's going on here the reality of who I am then you would not be guilty of sin but you're not you do know what's going on here you have seen clearly enough to be responsible for your actions and with what you've seen and what you are doing you are guilty you don't want to hear the truth I'm speaking in fact you're trying to do away with me you've seen enough to be responsible for what you've seen and how you've responded to what you've seen makes you guilty of sin because they refuse to accept the only way to be forgiven which is to come humbly to

Jesus there are many ways that this passage touches real life I mentioned some of them already but I want to end this morning simply by encouraging you to put yourself in the story imagine that Jesus comes and finds you and says to you do you believe in the son of man what's your answer to him this man said I believe and he bowed before him on the ground do you believe that Jesus is the son of man like that the Messiah like that the one who someday will bust through the clouds in glory and come to reign over this never ending kingdom that God has promised what's your answer to Jesus do you have faith in the son of man this matters everything coming to the place that this man came to on his face on the ground before

[29 : 50] Jesus and saying I believe is the only way to have eternal life it's the only way to have your guilt taken away I also want to encourage you to imagine for a moment that you're one of the Pharisees I know that's not something we naturally want to do but I think we can learn from them too the problem with them was pride an unwillingness to listen they thought they knew better maybe you don't have that struggle in your heart but maybe you do maybe you are thinking I've kind of got this figured out I've got I've had enough of Jesus already I'm good enough I'm good to go or maybe I'll take a little bit of Jesus but not too much I hope from

Jesus himself this morning that you hear and understand that he has come for judgment to sift and to separate and your response to him will make all the difference in the world for the rest of eternity he's either going to be the stone that you stumble over or the precious corner stone there's no in between you'll either be guilty or forgiven by God's grace there's no in between I want to end with the words of Jesus which we haven't come to yet but Jesus simply said this he said I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me let's pray father in heaven thank you so much for sending your son lord

Jesus thank you for coming as we're about to sing we celebrate we praise you that you have given sight to the blind and that that's your desire not that we should perish but that we should come to you and be saved thank you for the miracle that that is when it happens and lord it's happened for many of us here in this room but our desire is to see that happen to many more in this community and so we pray and ask that you would work in the hearts of people here in Davidson work in our friends our neighbors those we bump into as we work give us words to speak help us to share you well with them lord and bring more people to see the truth of who you are we ask this for your glory for your name

Jesus amen