

Jesus Light of the World

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 May 2021

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] Well, if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John, chapter 9.

We're making progress. We made it out of chapter 8, now we're into chapter 9. And things are already been interesting, but they're getting even more interesting as we go.

John, chapter 9, and we're starting in verse 1. John, chapter 9, verse 1.

As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth. Now, the way that John starts out this section, we don't get a lot of detail as to when this happens.

It's possible that this took place immediately or soon after he slipped away from the temple courts, which we heard last Sunday as they tried to kill him. Jesus has been here in Jerusalem for the Festival of Tabernacles.

[1 : 09] And the next major event in the story comes in chapter 10, verse 22, and that's the Festival of Dedication, or Hanukkah. And there's about a three-month span in between those two events, and so this happens somewhere in the middle, in between those two things.

And we do know that Jesus is still here in Jerusalem at this time. So John 9, verse 1. As he went along, Jesus, he saw a man blind from birth.

Notice who saw the man that was blind from birth. It doesn't say they, as in Jesus and his disciples, but he. Jesus was the one who took notice of this man.

This man was likely begging, as we'll learn from verse 8. Jesus took notice of this man. He saw him. And that right there is beautiful.

How many of us are tempted to look away when we catch a glimpse of someone with a disability in front of us or coming towards us? How many of us see but don't really see or pay attention to the poor man begging in the street?

[2 : 25] Jesus saw people in those situations. He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned?

This man or his parents? That he was born blind? Now I'm going to guess that if Jesus hadn't seen this man, the disciples would have probably been content to just walk right on by him without really giving any thought to him.

But because Jesus first sees this man and focuses in on this man, the disciples also turn and focus on this man. But the first thing out of their mouths, it seems, is not the most sensitive or compassionate thing, is it?

They have a question. Who sinned? This man or his parents? That he was born blind? At best, they're simply curious about the cause of his being born blind.

And at worst, they're being self-righteous and judgmental here. I don't know just what's going on in their hearts as they ask this, but it seems clear in the minds of the disciples that this man was born blind as a punishment from God for somebody's sin.

[3 : 49] And they want to know whose sin was it? Whose fault is it? For whose sin is this man being punished with blindness?

Now, it's difficult to imagine just what they're thinking here. They kind of got two questions. Is it his fault or is it the parent's fault?

I don't know how it could be his fault. How could a man be born blind as a punishment for his own sin? He hadn't even had the opportunity to sin prior to his birth.

Although apparently there was this whole discussion amongst the rabbis about whether a pre-born child could sin in the womb. Or did the disciples think that maybe he was born blind as a punishment for sins that he would later commit?

I don't know. Or was it because of his parents that he was born blind? Something that they did. Again, what do they mean by this? Maybe they're thinking back to some of those passages in the Old Testament where God says that he will punish the children of people who are wicked to the third and fourth generation.

[4 : 59] And even that opens a whole other discussion about what does that even mean? Does God do that? Or is it that the parents' sins have these consequences, these natural consequences that ripple down into the third and fourth generation?

Maybe like substance abuse can cause birth defects. Is that what the disciples are referring to? Well, we don't know what the disciples are referring to, but they have it in their mind that somebody is guilty, and that's why this man has been born blind.

Is it him? Is it his parents? Jesus answers their question. Verse 3. Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

So it wasn't because of some specific sin that this man had committed, and it wasn't because of a specific sin that his parents had committed, that he was born blind, says Jesus, but literally in order that the works of God might be displayed in him, this man was born blind.

Now for some of us, this is a difficult truth to swallow. And we can try and fiddle here with what Jesus is saying and try to make it come out a little bit differently, but it's pretty hard to escape the plain sense of what Jesus is saying, that this man was born blind for a purpose, according to the plan and purpose of God, so that in order that God might cause his works to be displayed in him.

[6 : 48] Now just how God brought it about that he was born blind, we don't know. Jesus doesn't say. And of course God never does what is evil or unjust.

I don't believe that he struck this child with blindness in the womb. Probably in some way sin and its general effects on human life, things like disease and sickness and even birth defects, is just probably how it came to be.

We live in a world that is broken, and even now our bodies are subject to death and to disease and even defects. Because of what happened long ago in the garden.

But I also believe that God could have remedied this. In that very moment as he was knitting this child together in his mother's womb, he could have, in an instant, by his power, remedied his eyes, so that they would have developed normally, that he could have seen if he had chosen to.

But he didn't. Because he had a purpose for him being born blind. A good purpose.

[8 : 01] A wonderful purpose. Something so wonderful that it would outweigh all the years of groping about in the dark by a thousand times. And what was his purpose?

It says, Jesus says, that the works of God might be displayed in this man. So that this man and other people might see what God would do for this man someday in the future.

So let's see what God does for him. Verse 4. Jesus continues to speak. He says, As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me.

Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Jesus is about to heal this man. We all know that. But before he does, he just has a couple more words that he wants to say. He wants us to hear before he does this. He could have just skipped these words and just straight up healed him.

[9 : 07] But I think there's something in these particular words that Jesus wants us to hear and to understand before we see what he's about to do.

He says, As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Okay. What does that mean? He says, Night is coming, when no one can work.

Okay. What does that mean? While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Hmm.

Imagine that you're one of Jesus' disciples, standing there, as he says this. What do you take from these words? What questions are coming into your mind to ask Jesus in this moment?

At first, Jesus seems to be talking about how we need to work while we still have the light of day. And if I'm there, I'm probably wondering, well, what does this have to do with the man that's blind here?

[10 : 15] Are you going to do the work of healing him, and then we're going to keep on working until sunset? Or is this a lesson of sorts? Are you giving us a lesson that we need to, we need to do the work that God has given us to do while we have opportunity to do it?

But then Jesus says something really metaphorical. He says, while I am in the world, I am the light of the world. So, are you talking about actual daylight?

Or working during a literal day like today? Or if not, then what does the day represent? What does the night represent? Why can't we work at night? I would have had my hand up for sure at this point.

What do you mean, Jesus? I got all kinds of questions. But I don't think Jesus would have stopped to answer them. Because Jesus is focused in on something here.

And we see this in the next verse. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Saying these things, or after saying these things, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.

[11 : 38] Go, he told him. Wash in the pool of Siloam. This word means sent. So the man went, and washed, and came home seeing.

Now I have no doubt that the disciples probably thought all this was rather weird. But now think of this, all of this, from the perspective of the blind man.

I want everyone here just to close your eyes for a second. Close your eyes. What do you see with your eyes closed? Imagine that this is all you have seen for your entire life.

Since the day you remember anything, this is what you have known. Oh, the world is rich with sounds, and music, and smells, and tastes. Everything has a very distinct feel to it, but this thing called seeing, and colors, and beauty, sunrises and sunsets, you've never experienced it before. Verse 8 says, his neighbors and those who had formerly seen him, begging, asked, isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?

[13 : 03] So this man, being blind all his life, eventually came to the place where his parents were no longer able to support him. He was unable to work. And so what did he do?

He sat there on the ground, and he begged, so that he could get enough to live on. So imagine it. And there you are, sitting in darkness.

And along come these guys, and the next thing you know, one of them is claiming to be the light of the world. Light. That's always a word that you've had a hard time really grasping.

Something you've heard so much about, but it's never really meant much to you. And then you hear someone spitting, like imagine this, and the next thing you feel is someone smearing mud onto your eyes.

And then he tells you to go wash yourself at the pool of Siloam. This would have been weird. But now think about this. What would it feel like, after decades of never having seen, to open your eyes for the first time?

[14 : 21] And to have all the colors, and beauty, and light of the world flood into you, and to see it. To look down into the water, and see your own face, your own reflection.

I bet it was the happiest, and most joyful day, of this man's entire life. Now what was the last thing that Jesus said, before this man had that experience?

He heard Jesus say, I am the light of the world. Do you think that those words meant a little bit more to him, than they did to the disciples?

I think so. Unlike the disciples, this man truly understood what it was like, in a very tangible way, to live in darkness.

To be always groping. Always feeling around. Always listening. Not certain about what was happening, all around him. The beauty of light, and the miracle of seeing, is something that we so easily take for granted, isn't it?

[15 : 34] And I think this is why Jesus said what he did, before he healed this man. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me.

Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. So Jesus very intentionally gets them thinking, about the contrast between day and night.

And we must work during the day, and we're unable to work at night. And I think, at least one of the things he means, this is intended to get us thinking about light, and how we need it.

We need it to be able to see the world around us. And then Jesus makes that declaration. I am the light of the world.

I am the one who enables you to see in this world. To see, to know, to understand what's really going on around you.

[16 : 43] This is how seeing works. Most of you know this. There's a light source, and light comes from the source, and it bounces off of everything, and into our eyes.

Our eyes are like these amazing, sophisticated, satellite receiver balls, for photons. Imagine yourself just sitting in a room, in darkness.

Without a light source of some kind in that room, you barely know what's in the room. You could be sitting in the middle of the most beautifully decorated, beautifully furnished room on the planet, and be completely unaware of it, if there is no light source in that room.

But the moment that that switch is turned on, you see exactly how everything is, in all its beauty. How things really are in that room.

This is what Jesus is getting at. He is the light source that God has provided for the people of the world. And without him, the people of the world are like people in that dark room.

[17 : 56] We grope about. We're trying to figure out what's going on all around us. Trying to make sense of life. Trying to make sense of why we're here. Of what's the deal with pain and suffering and evil and injustice in our world.

But Jesus is the one who shines like a light being turned on in that dark room. Enabling us to see what's really going on. What's true.

The truth of who we are. The truth of how glorious and beautiful God is. How does it work? Through his teaching.

His message. His words. And even the things he did. Through all of it. He is shining light upon everything. And we take that light in by listening.

And watching carefully the things that he did and said. But what's amazing here to me. Is that Jesus proves that he is the one who enables us to see.

[19 : 02] It's no coincidence that he says this. Right before he does this miracle for the man. He proves that he is the one who can enable us to see in the world.

By enabling this physically blind man. To see. It's amazing what Jesus did that day. I mean. This is not just fixing something that's been broken.

For a little while. This is giving a man something that he has never had. Ever. In his life. From the day he was born. The ability to see. This is something that no ophthalmologist can do.

An amazing work of God's power. But it's more than just a miracle. It's a sign. And it demonstrates more than just power. It's a sign that confirms that Jesus is the one who enables us to see.

In the darkness of this world. That he is the light of the world. The one who enables us to see clearly in the greater, deeper sense. What is true.

[20 : 09] In the world. In the world. No. Thank you. Thank you.

So his neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked the man after he had regained his sight, or they asked one another, they said, Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?

Answer in the original language, Yes, we think it is. Some claim that he was. Others said, No. He only looks like him.

But the man himself insisted, I am the man. Well, how then were your eyes opened? They asked. 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.

[21 : 24] He said. Think about it. He wouldn't have been able to even describe what Jesus looked like to these people. It's a beautiful story, and we're going to continue it next week.

It's part of a larger story here. But what can we take from what we have seen and heard this morning? I've got five things. First of all, and most importantly, do you know that Jesus is the light of the world?

Do you know that it's by his words that you can see clearly in this life and know the truth? It's quite the claim to make. It's quite the claim to make.

But look at what Jesus did to prove that he is the light of the world. He enabled a man born blind to see for the first time in his life. And if Jesus can do that, then he can enable us to see clearly in this world, as he says.

So have you accepted and embraced him for yourself as the light of the world? Number two. People with disabilities.

[22 : 39] Jesus saw them. He moved towards them. He engaged with them. He loved them. And so should we.

May each of us be known for seeing and moving towards people with disabilities. They are precious in God's sight. Number three.

Not every suffering or hardship or sickness is the result of a person's sin. Some of them might be. God brought sickness upon people in the Bible at various times and places as punishment for specific sins.

And he may do so at times today. But what Jesus says here, I think, clearly helps us see that not every sickness or trouble or hardship or disability is upon people because of some specific sin that they have committed.

If Jesus basically told his disciples in this moment, you guys are asking the wrong question. You guys have a wrong assumption here.

[23 : 51] Then we ourselves should stop asking that question about people who we see in our world today who are suffering. Or who are sick or who are going through a rough time.

It could be that God is punishing them for something. But it also may not be. May those of us who have received mercy instead of the punishment that we deserve be first to show mercy towards other people and pray God's very best for anyone and everyone, no matter what they have done.

We've all sinned. And we all fall short of the glory of God. Number four. Do you know that God has a purpose for disabilities, sicknesses, suffering, cancer, strokes, and troubles of all kinds?

God can make any of these things go away with a word for any of us. And sometimes, like this man, he does heal us in an instant.

But sometimes he decides not to heal us or not to take it away. And when he does, we can be absolutely confident that God has a purpose for allowing that to remain in our lives.

[25 : 18] Just like he did for this man here. It may not be exactly the same as it was for this man. God chose not to heal his eyes as he was knitting him together in his mother's womb.

Because he had planned that later on, this child would be the recipient of a miracle. A great miracle that would make him a sign. And would result not only in his own salvation, but in the salvation of countless people all around him.

His neighbors seeing the work of God in his life. And people throughout the ages hearing of this and reading this. Who would be saved through him. God had a great purpose for it.

And so whatever you or your loved ones are going through right now. Know that God has a purpose for it. And if you love God and belong to him.

Then you have his word that it's a good purpose. As Paul said in his letter to the church at Rome. Familiar verse, Romans 8.28. And we know that in all things, God works them together for the good of those who love him.

[26 : 35] And are called according to his purpose. And one day, we will look back on all the pain. And the suffering. And the hardship. And the health issues.

And we'll see just how God brought something spectacular. And wonderful from it. And we'll even thank him. For the times when we asked that he would take it away.

And yet he said, my grace is sufficient for you. So do not lose heart or be discouraged. God has a purpose for whatever you're going through right now.

Number five. Last one. If Jesus is the light of the world. If he's the one who enables us to see. Then shouldn't we be all the more eager to spend time with him.

Every day. Reading his words. Reading about what he did. Thinking about those things that he said. How they apply to everything in life.

[27 : 42] Where are you looking for your answers? To your questions. Where are you looking for wisdom? For perspective in life? I hope it's not mainly YouTube.

Or social media. Or the news. They can make almost anything look right. By casting things in a certain light. But Jesus is like the sun. When the sun rises.

The whole world around us is brightened up. And we can see clearly. Exactly how things are. So let's seek after his light. On any matter.

Before we look. Anywhere else. Let's pray. Father in heaven.

Thank you for sending your sun. To be light for us. Thank you for creating this world. This beautiful world. That we live in. And which you've made into a living parable.

[28 : 42] For us. Thank you that. We can know the truth. Because of Jesus. And thank you that you set us free.

You give us hope. You give us purpose and meaning. And that one day. We have the hope of glory.
We can't wait for that day Lord.
Carry us in the meantime. Make us an encouragement. To others around us. We love you. And we
pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.