

# The Innocent for the Guilty

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, well, we're picking up this morning where we left off last Sunday in the story of Jesus. Last Sunday, we heard how Jesus healed a man who had been born blind.

He enabled that man to see, and it was a sign that he is the light of the world, the one who enables us to see and to understand what's really going on in life. And we heard last Sunday how the man's neighbors reacted to that miracle.

Some of those who had known him when he used to be blind and a beggar. But this morning, we're going to find out what happened when the religious leaders found out about this. We're reading in John 9, verse 13.

John 9, verse 13. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

Therefore, the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He put mud on my eyes, the man replied, and I washed, and now I see.

[ 1 : 12 ] Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath. But others asked, How can a sinner perform such signs?

So they were divided. So John lets us know that the day that the man was healed was a Sabbath day. And as I read this, I can't help but be sad.

Are these Pharisees happy? That this man who had never seen before had his sight restored? Are they excited that an amazing miracle of God has taken place?

No. Instead, because it's the Sabbath day, some of them are asking questions about how Jesus did it. Not because they want to know the source of his power, but because they're looking for something in the way that he did it that they can use against Jesus.

And the man tells them how Jesus did it. He made mud. He put it on my eyes. And what's the next thing they say? Verse 16.

[ 2 : 20 ] This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath. He did work on the Sabbath. Making mud, that's work.

Isn't that sad? These are not just people who don't believe in Jesus. These are people who have their very hearts set against believing in Jesus. They're trying to make a case that he's not from God, because he made mud on the Sabbath day.

But, to the credit of some, some of these religious leaders, there were some there who realized that this isn't right. Some of them asked, how can a sinner perform such signs?

Only God can open the eyes of a man who has been born blind. Would God grant or allow or work such a wonderful miracle through this man if he was sinning in the very act of doing it?

That doesn't make sense. So they were divided. There was disagreement between some of them. And at the very heart of all this is the accusation or the question of whether Jesus is a sinner.

[ 3 : 33 ] Whether he is a sinful man. Let's remember what Jesus said to them back in chapter 8, verse 46. He said, Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?

Do you remember that? To the whole crowd gathered in the sanctuary. Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? And if not, then why don't you believe me? So Jesus has already challenged them to point out anything that he has done that is wrong.

Any sin he has committed. And so far, they've been unable to do so. But you can see how now some of these Pharisees are looking for anything that they can to discredit Jesus, to show him to be a sinful man.

And it's like they don't even notice, some of them, that he just healed this blind man. He can't be from God. He just broke the Sabbath. Making mud. That's work.

At least by their interpretation of things. Verse 17. Then they turned again to the blind man.

[ 4 : 42 ] What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, He is a prophet. They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

Is this your son? They asked. Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see? We know he is our son, the parents answered.

And we know he was born blind. But how he can see now or who opened his eyes? We don't know. Ask him. He is of age.

He will speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

That was why his parents said, He is of age. Ask him. So they doubted. They were skeptical that this miracle had really happened.

[ 5 : 52 ] And in some sense, I don't blame them for being skeptical. I mean, except by a great miracle of God, this would never happen. A man born blind healed?

His sight given to him for the first time in his life? Some of them had some theories. Maybe he wasn't really born blind. Or maybe this is a different guy than the one who was born blind.

And there's a bit of a mix up here. But the parents confirm that, yes, he is our son. And yes, he was born blind. And all these years, he hasn't been able to see.

But they didn't want to say any more than that. John tells us that the plotting and the scheming of the Pharisees has now come to a new level. They can't seem to turn the tables against Jesus in conversation with him in front of the crowds.

And he's continually exposing them in front of the people. And so they implement a new policy. Anybody who acknowledges that Jesus is the Christ, that he is the Messiah, will be put out of the synagogue, excommunicated, kicked out.

[ 7 : 06 ] In other words, we've made our judgment about this man, and he is not the Messiah. And if anybody crosses us, there will be consequences. Verse 24.

A second time, they summoned the man who had been blind. Give glory to God by telling the truth, they said. We know this man is a sinner.

He replied, Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know, I was blind, but now I see. Then they asked him, What did he do to you?

How did he open your eyes? He answered, I've told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?

Then they hurled insults at him and said, You are this fellow's disciple. We are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from.

[ 8 : 13 ] The man answered, Now that is remarkable. You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.

We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. To this they replied, You were steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us?

And they threw him out. So they go after the man again, and you can almost hear it dripping from their words. An accusation that this blind man, this man who was blind, is a liar.

Give glory to God by telling the truth. In other words, stop lying to us. We know that you've been lying to us. We know that this man, Jesus, is a sinner.

[ 9 : 17 ] Again, they've made up their minds about Jesus already. The man who was blind seems to answer quite humbly at first. I know very little about the man who did this for me.

I can't tell you about his life. I can't tell you about how he has lived. All I know is that he healed me. But that's not good enough for the Pharisees.

They ask him again, well, how did he do it? And you get the sense here that this poor man is sick and tired of telling his story to them again and again and again.

He knows that they're just looking for something to discredit the miracle or to discredit Jesus. And it's almost as if something inside of him just snaps. I've already told you, he says.

Why are you asking me again? And he throws in this little dig of his own. You guys seem so interested in this. Do you want to become his followers too?

[10:17] You can hear the sarcasm in his words. And they don't like that one bit. It says at this point that they began to insult him. Oh, we already know that you are this man's follower.

We aren't going to follow this man. No, we're followers of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses. But as for this guy, we don't even know where he comes from. And I love how the man who was blind answers him, answers the Pharisees here.

He says, now that is remarkable. You don't know where he comes from? And he opened my eyes. What is the man amazed at here?

I think he's amazed at their inability to read the clear sign. I mean, isn't it obvious? Look what he did to me. It's a miracle.

This kind of thing has never been done before by anyone. If this man was a sinner, God wouldn't have done this through him. Isn't it obvious that he is from God?

[11:26] Like, what more do you need? And this conversation ends with the Pharisees, I think, showing their true colors.

What an arrogant statement. You were steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us? It's a pretty loaded statement. They're basically saying, well, who are you to tell us what we should believe about Jesus on the scale of religious authority, on the scale of righteousness?

You're at the very bottom. And why do they say that he is utterly sinful from birth? Because he was born blind.

This kind of goes back to the conversation that Jesus had with his disciples. We talked about this the other day. His disciples asked him, Jesus, who sinned that this man was born blind?

And Jesus said, wrong question. Wrong assumption. It wasn't this man or his parents who sinned. That's not the reason. But now we see that the Pharisees are the prime example of this kind of self-righteous and arrogant religious pride.

[12:37] They're basically saying, yeah, well, we know why you were born blind in the first place. It's because you were utterly sinful from the moment you were born. Right from the start. So don't you dare try to teach us.

And they threw him out. Cast out. Excommunicated, I think, is implied here. The true colors of the Pharisees are coming out more and more.

And this is why Jesus called them children of the devil. Well, what can we take from all this? There is a good turn to what's happened that we're going to look at next Sunday with this blind man.

But this morning we're here to partake of the Lord's table. That's our focus. And one of the things that we see woven through this whole section is this accusation, this question of whether Jesus was a sinner.

Whether he is a sinful man. The Pharisees, they're desperate to prove that Jesus is a sinner. They want a reason to put him to death while maintaining their religious face.

[13:45] they've stumbled upon one of the greatest miracles ever done. But they're blinded by their pride and evil desires and they refuse to acknowledge the truth that this wonderful sign Jesus did points to.

And ironically, it's the man who was born blind and has lived blind all of his life up until this day who is seeing things clearly.

He doesn't know Jesus personally but he's able to read the sign correctly. And he sees that whoever this man is he must be from God.

God would not work miracles through him if he was a sinner, if he was an unrighteous man. And so John by telling this true story invites all of us to consider for ourselves is Jesus a sinner?

Is Jesus a man who stands guilty before God like all the rest of us? Or is he truly innocent, righteous, and pure?

[14:54] Is Jesus being arrogant and self-righteous when he calls out to the crowd? Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? Or is it possible that he stands apart from the rest of us as the sinless son of God?

The one human who is without sin. How would we know? God has given us clear signs like this one. Restoring the sight of this blind man through Jesus.

Something only God can do. And the man is right. God would not endorse, he would not work his wonders through someone who claims what Jesus does if his claims were false.

If he was deceiving. If Jesus, or is Jesus a sinner like the rest of us? The clear testimony of God is no.

He is not a sinner. He is my son. He is the one I sent into the world. And there are many scriptures that talk about this. It's how the story goes.

[16:05] Think about Judas. The one who betrayed Jesus. What did he have to say? After betraying Jesus, he went back. He said, I have sinned.

I have betrayed innocent blood. He knew Jesus was innocent. Then there's Pilate. Three times, he comes back to the people.

I find no basis for a charge against this man. He's innocent. innocent. And then he washes his hands. Even Pilate's wife knew Jesus was innocent.

She told Pilate, don't have anything to do with that innocent man. For I have suffered a great deal in a dream because of him. Peter knew he was an innocent man.

He walked three years with Jesus. And he wrote this in his letter. He committed no sin. And no deceit was found in his mouth. The devil knew he was a sinless man.

[17:06] And he made his best effort to change that, if he could, by tempting him in the wilderness. But of course, Jesus did not give in. In Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15, we read that Jesus is our high priest.

Christ. And he is able to empathize with our weaknesses because he has been tempted in every way, just as we are. Yet, the author of Hebrews says, yet, though he was tempted, he did not sin. Not once. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 5.21, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.

he knew no sin. He had no sin. Hebrews 7.26, referring to Jesus again as our high priest, he says, such a high priest truly meets our need, one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners. He doesn't have to offer sacrifices for his own sins like the rest of human priests had to. because he doesn't have any sins of his own. He is pure.

[18:29] The apostle John himself, in his letter, wrote these words, 1 John 3.5, in him, that's in Jesus Christ, is no sin, no wrong doing, no guilt.

In fact, John tells us the reason that Jesus came was to take away sins, to take away the guilt of others, for the sins that they have committed.

So whether Jesus is a sinner or not, is very important. It's at the heart of what we celebrate at this table. Because if Jesus was a sinner, then his death was deserved.

And it accomplished nothing for us. God was a sacrifice. He came to be a sacrifice that would atone for our sins. And for him to be that acceptable sacrifice, that acceptable substitute, we know from tracing the theme throughout the whole of the scriptures, he had to be spotless.

He had to be without blemish, without sin. Peter talked about this too in his letter. We looked at this in Sunday school. He said, for you know, it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors.

[19:59] No, you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. For us to be redeemed, for us to be set free.

Someone had to take the punishment that we deserved. But not just anybody could do that. He had to be a human, a man like us, yet without blemish, without defect, without any sin or guilt of his own. This was the only way. This is God's salvation plan. Peter said this in 1 Peter, 3 verse 18.

Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. sinless for the sinner. The innocent for the sinner. The innocent for the guilty.

[21:09] It was the only way that we could be justly forgiven, that we could be saved from the wrath of God that we deserve. And so it matters everything that Jesus is not a sinner.

The Pharisees were dead wrong that day. And the man who had been born blind and was healed, he was on the right track. And this table means everything to us.

Because of this, the blood that the cup represents is of infinite value to us. The body of Jesus that the bread represents can truly give us life.

and it's only because Jesus himself had no sin of his own, no guilt of his own, that he could atone for our sins.

And that's what he did when he suffered and died on the cross. And Peter tells us that he did that to bring you to God, to bring me to God.

[22:17] Forgiveness, relationship restored. And so as we come to the table, we're here to celebrate this. We're here to remember the most valuable and precious things in the universe, the body and the blood of our Lord, broken and poured out for us.

So if you're here this morning and you have repented of your sins, and you believe that he is that spotless lamb, who took the punishment that you deserve, then I invite you to partake together with us.

I'm going to pray. We'll have a moment of reflection and Charles will come and serve the table, but as you receive the bread and the cup, I'll just ask that you hang on to it until everybody has been served and then we'll all partake together.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we stand amazed as we think that you lived a sinless life, because we know that from our vantage point, that's impossible.

That's all we've ever known right from the start. We are sinners. We are guilty. And so we stand in awe of you for that. But most of all, we thank you that out of your mercy and grace.

[ 23 : 40 ] You would come and trade your life for ours. We can't even comprehend that kind of love. We say thank you.

Bless each one of us in our hearts as we do this in remembrance of you. We ask in your name. Amen.