

I AM the light of the world

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Date: 18 August 2024

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[0 : 00] Hello everyone, we'll be reading from John chapter 9 today, starting from verse 1 and stopping at verse 14 and then jumping ahead to verse 24.

So if you'd turn with me to John 9. 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 mud and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which means sent. So he went and washed and came back seeing.

[1 : 01] 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 it is like him.

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 him 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. Moving ahead to verse 24. 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?

[2 : 09] 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.

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 worshipper 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.

[3 : 17] 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 those who see may become blind.

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. Father, I know that my words have no power, but your words do.

And so I pray that you would fill us all with your spirit, and I pray that your spirit would help me to be clear and point to Jesus. And as we just sang, I pray that for each one of us, you would convince our hearts that your mercy is greater than the darkness.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Well, I'm sure you're all equally as excited as I am that the English Premier League has started again this week.

[4 : 32] Now, if anyone tells me the score of Liverpool's game last night, I'm not sure what I'll do. Like, it's not going to be pretty.

Like, you've seen me cry up front enough. Like, you don't need to see me cry again. Don't tell me the score. Now, a number of years ago, there was some tough things going on in my life, and I'm not going to go into the details, but what I thought was sure and certain and reliable was now just confusing, uncertain.

I knew it was a difficult time, but I didn't realise how much it was affecting me until one night, playing soccer with friends. We were at Spears Point Park with the synthetic, like, it was perfect, it was a clear night, stars were out, with friends, playing soccer.

Like, this is my lovely time, my idea of a lovely time. It's probably not yours. Now, the ball went out for a goal kick, so I had this moment of pause, just staring at the stars, and just this wave of sadness came over me.

It was just in that moment I was like, oh, oh, this is really affecting me. A few days later, I went to Warners Bay by the foreshore, coffee in hand.

[6 : 05] I'm not really knowing what I was searching for, but I started reading John's Gospel. I just started reading. Now, I did not come away with this aha moment.

This is the key to unlock my problems. Here's what I need to do. I did not come away with that. I was still sad. But it's really hard to put into words the strength, the peace that came, just seeing Jesus afresh.

It was the person of Jesus. There was something steadying about that. Whatever else was chaos, I know him, and he knows me.

We come this morning to the second I am claim of Jesus. Last week, we saw him feeding the 5,000, claiming that he can feed our spiritual hunger.

I am the bread of life. And now he's saying that he's the solution to our spiritual blindness. I am the light of the world. So as we come into this story, I think a way to see what's going on in this story is just listen out for what people claim that they know.

[7 : 37] They know for sure. Okay, so Jesus comes across this man who's been blind from birth. We don't know how old he is. We know he could be in his 40s or older.

He's an adult. He can testify in court for himself. Jesus makes mud with his saliva. It's strange. Puts it on his eyes and sent him to a pool called, which the name means sent. Now, I think the name is significant because it becomes the heart of the question that they're going to be debating. Is Jesus sent from God? Now, his neighbors, they had walked past this beggar. He's a blind man. He can't work. So he's been begging. They walk past him every day, all his life. They know him the best. And they're divided. It's him.

[8 : 35] It just looks like him. Like, how is this possible? They're divided. And so they take him to the experts, the religious experts of the day. Now, please don't be thinking that these ancient people were primitive in their understanding, thinking that mud and saliva and washing could cure blindness.

We do eye surgery today. The man, the neighbors, the religious experts, they're not focusing on that. They're focusing on the person, Jesus. But the experts who know their Bibles well, they're suspicious.

Well, most of them are. There seems to be a minority group who are amazed. But most of them are thinking, something fishy is going on here. They call in the parents. We didn't read this bit, but they call in the parents.

They don't believe he was blind from birth. But the parents come in and they say, yes, this is our son. Yes, he was blind from birth. But they sense the danger. And they're like, we don't know what's going on here.

Talk to him. Because they knew that the experts had already decided, if you follow Jesus, you're excommunicated.

[9 : 52] Leave. Cut off from the community, which is a big deal. You're treated as if you were cut off from God. So let's take stock of what the experts know.

They've got the testimony of the man. I was blind and now I see. They've got the testimony of the neighbours who knew him best. They've got the testimony of his parents.

This is our son. He was born blind. Now, according to the law of Moses, these experts had plenty of evidence to establish this matter.

But here's their conclusion. We know this man, Jesus, is a sinner. That's their conclusion.

We know. He can't be sent from God. Now, why are they so sure? Not because of what he did, but when he did it.

[10:59] He did it on the Sabbath rest. Now, rabbinical teaching was that only God can work on the Sabbath. Like the sun still needs to rise on the Sabbath day.

God is always working, bringing light and life to his world. But his people need to rest on the Sabbath to remember that their life is from God.

That they were delivered by Moses from Egypt to be God's worshipping people. God can work on the Sabbath to give life. Everyone else must rest.

Jesus healed. He did this work on the Sabbath. Now, we've skipped a lot in John's Gospel. This is the second time Jesus has done this.

He healed a man who couldn't walk for 38 years on the Sabbath. And they questioned him about that. And here's how he justifies himself in chapter 5, 17 and 18.

[12:05] My father is working until now. And I am working. Let's just say that made matters worse.

Because John goes on to explain, This is why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him.

Because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father.

Making himself equal with God. He's claiming to be greater than Moses. He's claiming that he can work.

Bringing light and life to the world. He must be a sinner. Now, these experts, they get in this irrational tangle.

Think about what they're doing. They're accepting that the miracle happened in order to conclude he worked on the Sabbath. This miracle happened and so he broke the Sabbath.

[13:20] They're conceding it happened. And they're just ignoring the obvious question. If Jesus can do this, what does this mean about where he came from? Look at the irony here.

These experts, the emphasis in this passage is, we know. We. We're the experts. We know. We see clearly. Follow us. Blind man, give glory.

Well, he's not blind anymore. He's seeing. Give glory to God. Tell the truth. Follow our lead. They're trying to pressure this guy who has been blind his entire life into denying the fact that this man Jesus came along and he saw light for the first time.

They're trying to pressure him into denying that. It's good luck. Good luck convincing him of that. It's just irrational.

The healed man, he starts with what he can't deny. Whether he's a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. That though I was blind, now I see.

[14:42] His sight seems to grow. Verse 11, this man called Jesus opens my eyes. Verse 17, he's a prophet.

A messenger from God. Verse 27, he implies, I'm following this Jesus now. And then he reasons from Moses, from the prophets, he reasons, God only listens to those who worship him.

And no one's ever heard of a man being born blind. Seeing. This has never happened since the world began. Jesus could not possibly have done a thing if he wasn't sent from God.

He's saying, there is a greater marvel, in a sense, there's a greater marvel than that I can see now. It's the marvel that you experts can't see where he comes from.

Now, for some reason, they don't like this. The experts, to use a soccer phrase, they play the man, not the ball.

[15:59] You're the one born in sin. How dare you lecture us? This is a strange scene.

Picture it. This is a beggar. I doubt he even owned nice clothes. And he's standing on his own. His parents, not even his parents, are supporting him.

He's on his own. He's uneducated. And he's surrounded by this learned group who have all the power in society. They can excommunicate, cut people off from...

And it's the experts who are reacting so strongly. They're so threatened. I think it's their emphasis on themselves that show what's really going on.

We know. How dare you lecture us? Here's what's really going on. They can't let go of the idea that they can already see clearly.

[17 : 11] They hate the idea that they might be blind so much that when they see this amazing victory of light over darkness in healing this man, they ignore it.

and they ignore what Jesus is doing. That Jesus is giving what the Sabbath rest was about. Sabbath rest was to remember God created all things, including humankind, which Genesis 2, 7 says, from the dust of the ground, God formed man.

Maybe, maybe, him making the mud was just a little signal that he is the creator. Either way, what he did, it's unheard of.

It's an act of creation, giving sight to a blind man. And Isaiah the prophet says this is exactly what the Messiah would do in chapter 42.

[18 : 26] Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it.

I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison, those who sit in darkness.

Much more than physical sight, this man receives spiritual sight. He believed Jesus came from God and now he takes one step more and he gives Jesus the reverence that's only appropriate to God. He bows down and he worships this human being. He was once sure that God was punishing him because of his sin or his parents' sin, someone's sin.

He was once sure God was against him and now in Jesus he's known, he's seen.

[19 : 47] He can see the grace and mercy of God. He can't, to use Caroline's phrase, he can't unsee Jesus now. Now I doubt he couldn't have known what it would have cost Jesus to do this because we later find out in John's Gospel that night was coming.

Jesus had to trade places with the man. Those claiming to see would decide to snuff out this light but Jesus chose to trade places with this man.

He let the darkness have him. So John's clever, isn't he, writing this?

You see what he's doing, don't you? He's letting us listen in on these people forming their conclusions about Jesus. Where is he from? Because it makes us reading it today ask ourselves, who do I agree with?

Do I more agree with those who are so sure that they can already see clearly? They know what God's about, they know what the world's about, they know what my life is about. I've already got light, I can see.

[21 : 18] Or, do I despair of my ability to know God, my ability to know my purpose, my ability to know what life is about?

Am I willing to say I'm as blind spiritually as this man was? Shifting sport illustrations, sorry for all the sport illustrations today for those who hate sport, but anyone know who Tom Brady is?

Okay, there's a few nods, a few hands. NFL, American football, quarterback, now think of the Super Bowl, how many people watch the Super Bowl?

It's over a billion, isn't it? You watch this grand final of this sport every year. Now he's played in 10 Super Bowls, this guy. He's won seven.

He was most valuable player for five of them. The country worships him. He's got a stadium of worshippers chanting his name.

[22 : 38] Now he had a TV interview in 2005, he'd only won three Super Bowls at that point, and he said in the interview, why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me?

I reach my goal, my dream, my life, and I think, God, it's got to be more than this. This can't be what it's all cracked up to be. This guy's a good looking guy.

He's much more handsome than me. He's got everything going for him. I've never been asked for a TV interview. Now the interviewer asks him, what's the answer?

I wish I knew. I wish I knew. how can someone at the top think there's got to be more?

I've reached my goal. Can you hear how lost he is? Whatever you make your goal in life, your purpose, your worth, it leaves you lost and empty and fearful.

[24 : 01] Now there's a danger. You might be hearing me say, those in church can see. We know what life is about.

Those outside living for the world, they don't know. This passage is saying something much worse than that. It's saying we're all born blind to God and what life is about.

All of us. all of us are spiritually in darkness thinking we know. People can come to church their whole lives every week and the preacher, the songs, the conversations are saying life is a gift, life is a gift in Jesus, life is a gift and they walk out the door going I've got to try harder, I've got to try harder, I've got to try harder.

you can totally miss it your whole life. On the flip side, someone can be so content in what they're living for other than Jesus and then they can find Jesus' light just irresistible even when they don't want him to be.

So here's Rosaria's story. As a university professor, as a professor, doing pretty well for herself, I tired of students who seemed to believe that knowing Jesus meant knowing little else.

[25 : 48] Stupid, pointless, menacing. That's what I thought of Christians and their God, Jesus. The Christians who mocked me on Gay Pride Day were happy that I and everyone I loved were going to hell, was clear as blue sky.

But that is not what Ken did. He did not mock, he engaged. So when his letter invited me to get together for dinner, I accepted.

Ken and his wife, Floyd, and I became friends. they entered my world and they met my friends. We did book exchanges, we talked openly about sexuality and politics.

They did not act as if such conversations were polluting them. And when we ate together, Ken prayed in a way I'd never heard before. His prayers were intimate, vulnerable.

He repented of his sin in front of me. He thanked God for all things. Ken's God was holy and firm, yet full of mercy. I started reading the Bible.

[26 : 50] I read the way a glutton devours. I continued reading the Bible, all the while fighting the idea that it was inspired. But the Bible got to be bigger inside me than I.

It overflowed into my world. I fought against it with all my might. And then one Sunday morning I rose from the bed of my lesbian lover and an hour later, sat in a pure church.

I fought with everything I had. I did not want this. I did not ask for this. I counted the costs and I did not like the math on the other side of the equal sign.

But God's promises rolled in like sets of waves into my world. And then one ordinary day I came to Jesus, open-handed and naked.

Jesus triumphed. I am the light of the world.

[27 : 57] Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Please will you pray with me? Father, I pray that you would help us to admit that we don't know where we're going.

that even as a society we're pretty lost. We don't know what life is about. And I pray that Lord Jesus you would make yourself irresistible to each one of us.

Help us set our eyes on you. And I pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.