

Jesus Heals the Blind

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[0:00] Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. So not too long ago, I was reading to Mia at bedtime from a volume of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales.

And as I was reading, I was struck especially when we started to read the story of the Emperor's New Clothes. Are you familiar with that one? Yeah. Really kind of a strange story, but it's pretty funny, I have to admit.

If you're not familiar with it, here is the basic outline. At the center of the story stands this vain and proud emperor who loves to show off his awesome fashion sense. Now it just so happens that he's taken advantage of by a couple of con men who promise him that they can weave clothes for him from a fabric that is so fine that only certain people can see it.

They tell him, they assure him, that if you can't see the fabric, if you can't see the clothes they're weaving, it must mean that you're either hopelessly stupid or you're unfit for your position.

[1:41] Well, long story short, the emperor and his court, of course, can't actually see the fabric because there's really nothing there, but they don't want to appear stupid or unfit for their positions, so they pretend that they can see it.

And then the emperor, to top it all off, decides to go on a procession to show off his new clothes. Now, the townspeople who are watching the procession pretend that they can see the emperor's new clothes because they don't want to look stupid or unfit for their positions.

But then a little child breaks the silence. The child points out that the emperor actually isn't wearing anything at all.

And the emperor is left to complete his procession with the knowledge that he is marching naked in front of everyone. Now, the child here is different from everyone else in the story.

The child, if you will, realizes that he or she, it's never specified, can't see. Can't see the clothes, and so only the child sees the truth.

[2:56] The others, wanting to keep up the pretense of being smart and being fit for their positions, claim that they can see when they really can't. In the story, as in our gospel reading for this morning, it's those who know that they do not really see, that they are blind, who have their sight restored.

And it's those who claim to see that can't see. So what does that mean for us? What does the story of a man born blind have to do with us who weren't born blind?

Well, let's dive into John 9 together and find out. Now, in verse 1, we see Jesus and his disciples passing by the man who was born blind.

Now, the disciples, understandably, are wondering if Jesus might be able to tell them how the man ended up that way. What happened?

How did he end up being born blind? The disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? And Jesus answered, It is not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

[4:26] Now, notice what Jesus didn't say. He didn't say, This guy's parents really messed up and they deserved this. He didn't say that karma was catching up to the blind man.

He didn't say, as the prosperity preachers would say, that this guy was blind because he didn't have enough faith to be healed. Didn't say any of those things.

Now, on a more general level, we know that we face death, disease, sickness, and disability, due to the presence of sin in this world. Surely that must have been true of the man who was born blind.

He was born into a broken and sinful world and felt the consequences. But we see that God allowed that to happen to this particular person so that God's power might be displayed.

How would that power be displayed? It would be displayed in the person and work of Jesus.

[5:29] As our text says, says, 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. Jesus, in the healing that is about to happen, is displaying who he is.

He's displaying the power of God. Demonstrating that Jesus and Jesus alone is the light of the world. That he alone is the light that conquers the darkness.

That he is the Lord. That he is the promised one who can open the eyes of the blind. That he is the Savior who can bring life where death used to reign.

So he does. He spits on the ground, anoints the man's eyes with the mud, and tells the man to wash. The man washes.

[6:26] And his blindness becomes sight. Now obviously, the man is thrilled with the miracle that Jesus worked. Why wouldn't he be?

But as it happens, not everyone is quite so thrilled. Much of the passage we read this morning deals with the man and his parents being interrogated by those who are none too pleased with what Jesus has done.

They are the ones who, of course, know better than Jesus. Because they would never heal on the Sabbath. Now if we look at the questioning in detail, and we won't today because it's a very long text and you don't want me to preach for three hours straight, we would see an absolutely striking pattern start to emerge.

The man born blind is basically asked what happened and who is the man who did this? Look for a second at how the man's answers develop.

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 washed.

[7:40] So I went and I washed and I received my sight. Then, 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. And then a little later on, if this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

And finally, the man encounters Jesus again and the eyes of his heart are fully opened. 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. Notice the progression there. The man begins with simply recounting what Jesus did.

[8:49] He moves on to acknowledging that Jesus must be a prophet to have done what he did. Then he acknowledges that Jesus must be from God to have done what he did. And then he encounters Jesus a second time.

And he acknowledges that Jesus is even more than a prophet, more than one sent from God. He acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of Man, the Messiah, that he is the Lord and that he is worthy of worship.

What we see in this passage isn't only Jesus restoring the man's physical eyesight. that's set up in parallel to Jesus, revealing the truth of who he is to the man born blind, opening his eyes to who Jesus is, opening his eyes to the truth, giving the man eyes to see Jesus.

The man moves from physical blindness to being able to see, and he moves from spiritual blindness, not knowing who Jesus is, to seeing who Jesus is, and believing and worshipping him. Jesus works in the life of the blind man because he came into this world to give sight to those who can't see. Now, what about those who don't believe what Jesus has done in healing the blind man?

[10:24] There's something of a progression that we see with them, too. They seem to go from a bad place to a worse place. Now, at the beginning, at least some of the Pharisees were unsure about doubting what had happened.

But as those who question the man continue to question him, their hearts seem only to be getting harder. The scoffers are saying, we have the spiritual insight to know that this man, Jesus, shouldn't be healing on the Sabbath.

We know better than to think that this man was actually healed from blindness. We know better than you do. We're disciples of Moses, and you're just a disciple of the man Jesus.

And finally, they say to the blind man, you were born in utter sin, and you would teach us. And they cast him out.

It's as if they're saying, we see because we're wise. We see because we're morally good.

[11:31] We see because we're properly religious and we can check all of the right boxes. We can see, not you. And what is the blind man saying?

We look at the whole of the passage. the blind man saying, I see because of what this Jesus has done. So I believe him, and I worship him as Lord.

And we can practically hear the famous words from the hymn Amazing Grace when we read this account. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

Those who are blind receive their sight, and those who think that they can see are revealed as blind. And so Jesus said, for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

Now, if we think for a second about what Jesus is saying here, I think we can pretty readily come to the conclusion that there are two types of people in this world.

[12:48] That's those who know that they are blind, who know that only Jesus can restore their sight, and so they receive their sight in Christ alone.

That's one category of people. And then there are those who think that they can see, who think that they are wise, who think that they are knowledgeable, when really they are blind.

And each of us, I think, can find ourselves in this story. Who are you? Well, I'll give you a hint, you're not Jesus.

That should narrow it down. are you the blind man who knew his blindness, who found his sight restored in Jesus, who saw Jesus for who he really is, and worshipped him as his Lord?

Or are you among the scoffers, trusting in your own sight, your own wisdom, your own righteousness, when actually you're stumbling around in the dark, in blindness.

[14:09] I hope we recognize that Jesus has restored our sight when we were blind, that we see him.

I hope that we are in that category of people. people. And it's really an amazing thing. If we recognize ourselves as the man born blind, we realize what we were rescued out of.

We were born blind. We began perishing. We began without hope. We began in the darkness. And if we began perishing, we began with the light of the gospel veiled from our eyes.

That's what we see in 2 Corinthians 4. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

That's where we came from. If we see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, how in the world did that happen? Well, in that same chapter, we see in verse 6, for God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[15:41] If you are a believer, think about what the Lord has done for you. God drove out your blindness, God gave you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

Where? In the face of Jesus Christ. Only God's grace in Jesus can open the eyes of the blind.

Only God's grace in Jesus can cause the light to shine in our hearts. Only by God's grace in Jesus can we truly say, I once was blind, but now I see.

so we see the undeserved grace of God from the very beginning in our lives.

The moment, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in our hearts and our blindness is healed, it is the doing of God. It is miraculous.

[16:44] The glory of God shines in our hearts, Jesus is revealed to us, and we cling to him by faith, trusting in his blood shed for us. And of course, that can happen when we least expect it.

For the man born blind began on the day that Jesus happened to be passing by. For the Christian apologist and good Anglican C.S.

Lewis, it happened to him while he was riding in a motorcycle sidecar on the way to the zoo. And no, I'm not making that up. That's really what happened. Probably the only time in history anyone was ever glad that they had ridden in a sidecar.

For me, it happened when 16-year-old Caleb was sitting on his bed reading the New Testament, coming to the sudden realization that this Jesus that I'm reading about really is the Lord.

And of course, for some it seems to happen so early in life that they pretty much grow up having known Jesus as Lord and Savior for as long as they can remember. But the one thing that we all have in common as believers is that our eyes have been opened and we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[18:06] And isn't that amazing? that is, as we think about discipleship during Lent, that is and will be what drives our discipleship from beginning to end.

The kindness of God to us even when we were lost and we were blind. And the kindness that continues as we walk with him. we want to see, if we want to see the light that drives away the darkness, if we want to see the truth, we want to see our only hope and if we want to see our greatest joy, where can we look but to the face of Jesus?

And if we want to walk as children of light, not as those who are stumbling in the darkness, as our epistle reading from this morning instructs us to do, how do we do that?

We keep doing what we have done from the beginning. We look to Jesus. We look to the one who gave us our sight in the first place. We trust in him.

From beginning to end, we look to Jesus. And we trust, not in ourselves, but in the incredible grace of God.

[19:30] we walk with Jesus. We abide in Jesus. We spend time with Jesus. We grow to love Jesus more and more. And brothers and sisters, that is what our Lenten repentance is really about.

It should drive us to draw closer to Jesus. It should draw us into an ever-deepening, loving relationship with the Lord. Lord. It's fine and good to give up chocolate and Facebook for Lent if that helps you on that front, and it really might.

But it's even more important that we take this time, that we take this opportunity to spend more time with Jesus in prayer, to spend more time in his word, to spend more time with the one who loves us, the one who cured our blindness, the one who found us when we were lost, the one who died for our sins, the one who defeated death for us by rising again, the one who stands as our mediator at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

Spending time with him is what it's about. That is the call to every single one of us during Lent and every day for the rest of our lives, to walk in the light with the one who cured our blindness.

In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.