

Truly Seeing Jesus

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[0 : 00] I don't know how well you see. Perhaps you're one of those people who are blessed with 20-20 vision. Or perhaps your vision is less than that, like mine.

I actually only really have one good eye. If I cover my good eye like this, you are all now blurry. Which is probably not a bad thing. No, I'm not joking. But so much so that when I went to renew my licence at VicRoads, you had to do one of those eye tests, you know the ones?

Actually, someone sent me a joke one on the next slide, I think it is. It's meant to be blurry at the bottom, so don't panic. But I remember standing there on the line, and I just leaned forward as close as I could and said the letters as quickly as I could so she didn't pick up any mistakes.

Don't tell VicRoads. But no matter how well we see, there is one thing we all need in order to see, and that's light. Whether we have glasses, contacts, magnifying glasses, or even 20-20 vision, no matter how good or bad our eyes are, we all need light to help us see.

Without light, we cannot see a thing. And as we come to John chapter 9 today, Jesus again calls himself the light of the world because he helps us see, not just physically, but actually spiritually.

[1 : 28] So at point 1 in the outlines, verse 1 in your Bibles, we read, As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

Neither this man nor his parents sinned, Jesus said, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. And now the Feast of Tabernacles has just ended where everyone was buzzing over whether Jesus was the Messiah, which is the same as Christ or King.

And Jesus has just left the temple as the Feast has just finished because at the end of the Feast, the Jews actually try and stone him to death. I'd leave too.

But he's just left. And as he leaves, he sees a blind man from birth, blind. And now a common belief amongst the Jews of the day is what we see with the disciples, that if you were suffering, then you deserved it because either you or your parents sinned.

In fact, some people still believe this today. I remember a friend of ours told us that whenever she tripped over or accidentally cut herself cooking or something, her mum would say, oh, you must have sinned. It's not particularly great parenting.

[2 : 39] And it's not always true, but here's the thing, it is sometimes true. And we need to realise that there are a couple of examples in the Bible where someone's suffering is directly related to an ongoing or persistent sin in their life.

We know this ourselves from our own experience. If you speed down Doncaster Road past the police, then you're going to suffer a fine. It's a direct suffering from direct sin.

So when we suffer, it's a question worth asking, is there some sort of unchecked persistent sin that I'm not dealing with in my life? But here's the thing, it's not an answer we should always assume, like the disciples did.

Because in the Bible, far more often our suffering is related to living in a fallen world, where there is disaster and disease that we get caught up in.

And Jesus knows this. So he says that neither the parents nor the child sinned to cause this suffering. Instead, God has planned to use it for good.

[3 : 47] This suffering caused by a fallen world under God's sovereignty is going to use it for good. What good? Well, to display the works of God and by the end of the chapter, to give this man life eternal with God.

And now what are these works of God? Well, they are Jesus' words and miracles that the Father has given him to do. So verse 4, As long as it is day, we must do the works of him that is the Father who sent me.

Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. And now the day here refers to the time Jesus is alive in the world, and night refers to the time when he is betrayed, arrested and crucified.

At that moment, no one will work. In fact, the disciples scatter, don't they? And hide. But while he's alive, Jesus is travelling around with his disciples, doing the works God has given him to do. The words of his teaching and the miraculous signs. Why? Well, God has given them for him to do so that people might see who Jesus is.

[5 : 00] I remember John's purpose statement. It's on the next slide in bigger font. Jesus did lots of miraculous signs, but these are written that you might believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the King, the Son of God, and by believing have life in his name.

This is why Jesus is the light of the world. Because by his words and works, he helps people see who he is. That they might believe in him.

And then once believing in him, he then enables them to see God and life eternal. That's what Jesus meant last week in chapter 8, verse 12, on the next slide, I think it is.

Remember, we heard this last week, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows or believes in me, it's very equivalent in John's gospel, will never walk in darkness. That is, will never walk separate from God.

Instead, we will have the light of life. Life eternal. Life to the full where we now know God and where we are going in life.

[6 : 10] And where we will have new physical life later in the world to come. that life. And Jesus also said later in chapter 8, which we didn't get to last week, he said on the next slide, later in chapter 8, that we are all slaves to sin, but he's also come to set us free from slavery to sin.

And so, as we heard last week, Jesus is God's servant from Isaiah 42, our first reading again today. Because on the next slide, Isaiah 42, this is the servant who is a light to the Gentiles to do what? Well, to open the eyes that are blind and to free the captives from prison. That is, from slavery to sin. Jesus has come to be a light who helps people see who he is so that by believing he might free people from sin and help them to see life eternal with God.

And yet, so far in John's Gospel, it doesn't seem like many eyes have been opened, does it? That is, it doesn't seem like many people actually see who he is and believe in him.

I mean, chapter 5, he healed the lame man, do you remember? And the lame man didn't believe in Jesus, he went and doxxed Jesus in to the Pharisees. Then in chapter 6, Jesus healed 5,000 men plus all the others and they followed him but by the end of the chapter, we read, many turned back and no longer followed him.

[7 : 41] Then chapter 7, Jesus says, he gives the spirit so that we can have life eternal and yet people are still undecided and confused about him. And then last week in chapter 8, he says, he's the light of the world and in verse 30, it says, many believe but by the end of the chapter, those same people are the ones who pick up stones to kill him because they don't really believe.

And so, so far in John's gospel, we might wonder whether Jesus' light is any good. Is he helping anyone to see who he is? A little while ago, we had a blackout and I grabbed my trusty dolphin torch and I went to put it on and nothing.

The batteries were flat. They're still flat. Anyway, it was not very helpful. And as readers of John's gospel, it might feel like Jesus' batteries have gone flat.

He says he's the light of the world to help people see who he is and know God but it doesn't seem like many people have actually truly come to believe in him and know God. And so that's why John includes this miracle here.

He wants us to know that Jesus is still the light of the world. He is still the way and the means by which people see. And to prove it, verse 6, after saying this, the light of the world, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes.

[9 : 15] Go, he told him, wash in the pool of Siloam, which means scent. So the man washed and came home, notice seeing. And as preachers, us preachers, we like a good illustration to make the point, but we ain't got nothing on Jesus, do we?

He says, I'm the light of the world who enables people to see spiritually, and then he backs it up by enabling this man to see physically. Now I'm not sure how the blind man got to the pool, perhaps he knew his way or had some help.

Either way, he came home seeing, didn't he? It's an extraordinary work of God. And yet, how will his neighbours respond? How will the Pharisees respond? Will they see this miracle of Jesus and then allow that to help them see who Jesus really is?

Well, point to verse 8. His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg? Some claimed he was.

Others said, no, he only looks like him. But he himself insisted, I am the man. How then were your eyes open they asked? He replied, the man they called Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes.

[10:27] He told me to go to Siloam and wash, so I went and washed and then I could see. Where is the man they asked? I don't know, he said. Now, this is the first of four interviews or interrogations where a group questions an individual or person about this miracle.

And each one shows us the response of the group. And so here, for example, the neighbours interview the man, don't they? They question him. And we can see their response starts off in disbelief.

Oh, we've got the wrong guy, it's not him. He says, no, it really is. And so they ask how it was he was healed. The man says, Jesus. They say, where is he? I don't know.

I mean, the man was blind, wasn't he? He didn't know who Jesus was. And at this point, the crowd could have, the people could have, went searching for Jesus themselves.

I mean, the Feast of Tabernacles was only last week, and he stood up in the temple in front of everyone, saying, I'm the light of the world. The neighbours would have known who Jesus was.

[11:35] And yet, instead of searching for Jesus themselves, verse 13, they brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. The Pharisees were the Jewish authorities of the day, and it seems that people weren't going to make a move without their consent.

And this suggests that they trust more in human authorities than the evidence in front of them. And people do that today, too, don't they?

Despite the evidence for Jesus, people trust more in their own human authorities. I'm not talking so much about the government, but their own authorities in their life, whether it's social media or what their friends say. or parents say, or even what their own religion says.

And as Christians, we can fall into this trap, too, I think, if we ignore what the Bible says and rely on our own church authorities or church leaders. It's why we always say to open your Bibles.

It's why I always show my working from the passage, even if you just prefer me just to tell you the answer, because I want you to trust in the evidence of God's word rather than the human authorities.

[12:44] But despite the evidence that people refuse to search for Jesus and instead trust in the human authority of the Pharisees. There's another two interviews.

We're not going to be able to have time to look at them all. I've listed them for you on your outlines. Instead, why don't we skip down to the last interview, which is verse 24, where the Pharisees question the man again.

So have a look at 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.

I don't know if you picked up the irony there. They're not only putting the heavy word on the man, but they're saying give glory to God by telling the truth, and yet they're denying the truth who Jesus is. They think they know he's a sinner.

He can't possibly be the Messiah, the King. The man doesn't cave in though. He says in verse 25, 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.

[13:51] It's a great line, isn't it? It's part of a great hymn too. And it's not a bad tactic if we're talking to people. I notice he doesn't get drawn into their arguments about whether he's a sinner or not.

He just sticks to his personal testimony of what this man, Jesus, has done in his life. Which means, by the way, it's worth all of us having our own personal testimony to share should the occasion arise.

Whether it's how God led us to Christ or how God has worked in our life, people today are much more likely to listen to a personal story than what the church as an institution has to say.

And what's more, people find them harder to refute, like the Pharisees do here. And so they actually try a different tactic. They become like police officers in an interrogation and ask the man the same questions again to see if his story changes.

Verse 26, they asked him, what did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? He said, I have told you already and you did not listen.

[14:58] Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too? Then they held 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.

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. And to this they replied, you were steeped in sin at birth, how dare you lecture us? And they threw him out. Who says the Bible's never funny? But again, the man sticks to his experience or his evidence, and he almost sticks it to them too, doesn't he?

But in the end, he's really just simply pointing out what's logical. If Jesus was not from God, how could he do such an extraordinary miracle? For which we also have outside the Bible evidence too, just so you know.

[16:12] If Jesus was not from God, then how could he do something that's never been done before? You see, he's simply drawing a logical conclusion from the evidence.

And yet the Pharisees refuse to listen to logic. Instead, they resort to a personal tact, did you notice? You're steeped in sin at birth, how dare you lecture us, get out.

And sadly, that again seems like our society today. Each of these responses in these interviews sounds like our world actually. It seems like today you can't have an open discussion about Jesus without people getting personal.

I mean, it was only two years ago when the Cooper's Beer released some beers celebrating the Bible Society's 200th anniversary. Do you remember that? And some of the beer boxes had verses from John's Gospel actually.

Like on the next slide, I think, is one. But because it was around the time of the marriage debate, there was outrage.

[17:15] Our pubs poured Cooper's Beer down the street drain, which I would have thought was littering actually, and there were personal attacks on social media. All they were trying to do was keep it light, hence on the next slide back, it's a bit hard to see, it was premium light beer, because they were trying to keep it light, to have discussions about Christianity and marriage, but our society left reason and logic at the door, and instead resorted to personal attacks.

In fact, one of the other cartons on the next slide now, had this verse, which it's hard to see, so I'll put it down the bottom of the screen, and it says, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it, and yet it kind of feels a bit like the darkness has overcome the light, because it seems like people aren't seeing who Jesus is, and so again, has Jesus' batteries gone flat?

As the light of the world, can he actually help anyone to see? Well, yes, actually, which is point three. In fact, he's been helping this man to see all the way through the passage, and throughout the passage, the man keeps coming back to the miracle Jesus performed, and the more and more he's interrogated, the more and more he believes.

Did you notice that? Verse 11, he starts off by saying the man called Jesus, so he calls Jesus the man, and then he's questioned by Pharisees in verse 17, he then steps up to say, oh, he's a prophet, and then when he's pushed again in verse 33, he says, he's from God.

You see, Jesus has been helping him to see spiritually by performing this miracle and then letting him face these interrogations, which means, by the way, that we should never run away from being questioned for our faith.

[19:09] Don't mishear me, we don't go looking for persecution, but if it comes, take heart, God will use it to grow us. But the point here is, as the light of the world, Jesus not only enables him to see physically, but is enabling him to see spiritually too, bit by bit.

The darkness has not overcome Jesus. He's still the light, he's still shining, he's still helping people to see. And particularly in the last section of verse 35, do you see there?

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. Jesus finds him, asks this question, and remember the man has never laid his new eyes on Jesus before.

He doesn't know who this guy is exactly, but he does know someone called Jesus healed him, and that this Jesus is from God, and perhaps he's heard how Jesus went around calling himself the Son of Man.

[20 : 18] Either way, this man is ready to believe in this Son of Man. He just needs to know who he is. And so verse 37, Jesus said, you have now seen him.

In fact, he is the one speaking with you. Then the man said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him. I suspect Jesus deliberately uses the words, seen me, because now the man did not only see Jesus physically with his new eyes, but he sees Jesus spiritually as the one from God, the Son of Man, the Messiah.

And so he believes and worships Jesus. What's more, by believing in Jesus, he now sees life eternal with God. And so John is helping us to see that Jesus' batteries have not gone flat.

He still is the light of the world that helps people see who he is, that we might then know God and life eternal. But at the same time, John wants us to realise that Jesus, the nature of his ministry is not only to help people see, but to help others not see.

It divides. Have a look at verse 39, which is really the summary verse for the chapter and explains his ministry, why some see and some don't. 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.

[21 : 48] Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, what are we blind to? Jesus said, if you are blind, then you would have been able to see and you would not be guilty of sin.

But now that you claim to see and you think you know who I am and got it wrong, well, your guilt remains. Jesus says, verse 39, he has come for judgment, not to punish, but to arbitrate, to divide those who are blind from those who think they see.

To the blind he will give sight, but to those who see he will make blind. For as the light of the world, that's what light does, doesn't it? I'm sure we've all had the experience when it's been dark in our house, we've turned on the light perhaps in the kitchen, and we can then see everything, including the cockroaches that scudded across the floor.

In fact, at the earlier service, I kid you not, there was a cockroach that just went across here, and they could see it quite clearly because the light was shining right down here. But on the other hand, we've also had the experience, haven't we, when it's been dark for a while and someone turns on the light and it's so bright, it's blinding.

We squint and put our arm over our faces and our eyes and go, no, it's too early to get up. Light does both things, doesn't it? Or so too does Jesus' ministry.

[23 : 03] And to those like this blind man who don't claim to know everything but humbly look at the evidence, Jesus enables them to see. But those like the Pharisees who arrogantly claim he is a sinner, who think they know who Jesus is without looking at the evidence, refusing to look at the evidence actually, well then they remain blind to who he is.

If in verse 41 they were more like the blind man who humbly looked at the evidence, then they would have truly seen who Jesus is and have their sins forgiven and given life eternal.

all. But because they don't, they stay blind and stay in their guilt. This is how Jesus both gives sight to the blind but also blinds those who think they can see.

I remember going surfing with a guy from work. Yes, I used to surf once at one time. I can't stand up on a board now. But I used to go surfing with a guy from work and we were in the car on the way to the beach. And I mentioned just one thing about Jesus and before I could even finish my sentence, he cut me off and rather harshly said, don't ever talk to me about that stuff again.

You see, he had no interest in hearing any evidence or personal testimony. He was sure he already knew who Jesus was, namely a waste of time.

[24 : 27] That's who he was sure Jesus was, just a waste of time. So he refused to look at any other evidence or even enter into discussion. And so the mention of Jesus, the news about Jesus simply confirmed his blindness, you see.

On the other hand, I know a number of people who through coming to the light of Jesus in the Bible, they were able to see who he is and believe. One particular person stands out because he came to church, my last church actually, he was interested in a girl.

And the girl said, look, I'm not going out with you because you're not a Christian. We can stay friends. And she very wisely said, oh, I keep coming to church. I'm happy to talk to you. But he had a planned trip to Canada, a trip to Canada already planned.

And so he left and he went over there and he had to decide, look, is this girl worth it? And he thought, yeah, I bet she is. I want to check out what she believes. And he sat in his room in Canada and read the Bible and saw who Jesus was and became a Christian on his own reading the Bible. For those who like a happy ending, they did get together and I married them a couple of years later. I'm more excited by the fact that he saw and became a Christian.

[25 : 42] But anyway, it's nice, it's a nice story. But you see, John wants us to know that Jesus' batteries are not flat. He still is the light of the world.

He's still the one we are to go to to help see in life, to see who he is, how to live life, how to know God. God, it's just that as light, he does both things.

He helps some see, but he confirms others in their blindness. And so if you're not a Christian here this morning, then the first question is, do you truly see?

Or are you like the Pharisees and the world who claim they know exactly who Jesus is and so can't be bothered looking at the evidence and thinking about it? You've already decided he's just a good teacher or some outdated figure or a waste of time?

Or will you be like the blind man who doesn't claim to know everything but looks at the evidence of Jesus and his word and then sees?

[26 : 46] Who are you going to be like? For us who once were blind but now see who Jesus is, then do we firstly thank him for opening our eyes?

Because now we have life eternal. We know God. We know what life's about. We can have meaning and purpose. But we know how to live wisely in this world in a way that he's made us. And secondly, do we continue to come to Jesus as our light in the word? Not only to keep living well in this life but to keep serving him as our king and saviour.

Or have we developed spiritual cataracts? You know what cataracts are? It's when your lens goes a bit cloudy and you can't see clearly. And over time, I've had this experience in my own life, but lots of Christians, over time we just start to see Jesus less clearly as our king and saviour because we don't serve him joyfully or completely.

You know, we serve him when it's convenient because he's kind of the king and we serve him begrudgingly because he's kind of our saviour. We forget what he's done for us so it's all a chore.

[28 : 02] But if you've had that experience, then come back to the light. That is, come back to Jesus in the Bible and help him to see, help him for you to see more clearly.

To see that he really is the king whom we should worship rightly. Help him to let you see clearly that he's the saviour, that we might serve him joyfully.

And then lastly, we have to keep doing all we can to help others come to the light. That is, come to Jesus in his word. That they too might see who he is, believe, and have life with God.

We are to do what we can, whether it's pray that God would soften hard hearts. God could still soften the hard hearts of these Pharisees.

We are to share our personal testimony when the opportunity comes up. Or point people to the evidence we have. Or support others who can do these things if we can't.

[29 : 11] I mean, Easter is not far away. The eggs and hot cross buns have been in the shops for a while. I think two days after Christmas they went in. And so if you're having an afternoon tea with friends, why not buy us some hot cross buns and say that Easter is really meaningful to you.

And see if they bite. Both senses. Or perhaps invite them to a service or pray for our services coming up. We are to do whatever we can to help people come to the light.

To come to Jesus in his word so that they might see who he is, believe, and have life with God.

Let's pray.

We would. Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you that Jesus still is the light of the world. He is still the means by which you help us see.

Not only see who he is and so believe in him, but also then see life eternal with you. How to live in this life and the certain hope we have the life to come.

[30 : 18] I finally pray you would help us to keep coming back to the light of Jesus in the Bible. That we might continue to see clearly who he is, our king and savior. And so keep joyfully serving him.

And help us to do all we can to bring other people to the light, to Jesus in his word, that they too might see who he is, believe, and have life.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.