

Looking for Healing?

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[0 : 00] Hope you got the vibe of that story, and certainly we'll go through that again tonight. But there's an outline as well in the handout that you might have picked up on the way in, that you might be able to follow along.

Well, everyone learns from a young age the whole principle of cause and effect, right? From the moment they licked too hard on an ice cream, only to see the scoop fall to the ground, like this poor child.

Or bumping our heads against a railing, because we didn't see it above our heads. We learn quickly, don't we, that we live in a world ruled by cause and effect.

And this is true morally as well. There are consequences for doing something bad. And some people call it karma, others simply as getting their just desserts.

Not that boy there with his dessert, but yep. But we have this very strong and innate sense, don't we, of justice and fairness. And so when we ourselves meet misfortune, we ask, don't we, what have we done?

[1 : 13] What have we done to deserve it? We do this even though we may know, like with science and technology, that it's actually just Mother Nature or chance.

Like a storm that floods your home, that's Mother Nature or cancer. That's just random genetic mutation. And yet we ask, did we do something wrong to deserve this?

Well, looking at John chapter 9 today, we find it's a question that was asked even in Jesus' time.

For we read in verse 1, As Jesus went along, he saw a man born blind.

His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Now here you can see that the disciples did not just ask if the man sinned, but whether his parents as well.

Why? Because if he was born blind, then he couldn't have done anything wrong, could he, to deserve it? So it must be his parents. Or so they thought.

[2 : 17] Except that Jesus replied on the next verse, Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is his 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. And after saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.

Go, he told him, wash in the pool of Siloam. This means sent. So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. Now I wonder when you are hearing this answer, how you might feel.

Imagine living for years, questioning, why me? Only one day out of nowhere to be healed. Would you be resentful because you've had to suffer for so long when it's not your fault?

Or would you be overjoyed when you finally receive God's kindness? Now what about the disciples and us as observers?

[3 : 27] What should we learn from Jesus' answer? Well, I think firstly is that sometimes our perspective on life can be too narrow. We tend to focus just on ourselves.

When it comes to personal suffering or calamity, we say, why me? But Jesus is saying actually that God has a bigger objective in mind. And in the case of this blind man, the bigger objective is to glorify his son, Jesus.

Yes, this man may have suffered much. But what it does show is how clearly and remarkable then God's work through Jesus is when he's finally healed.

You see, the bigger the hole that God has to pull us out of, the more amazing, isn't it? The rescue. And so it does make us sit up and take notice.

Because it's not every day, is it, that we see someone like that healed. It is out of the realm of our daily experience and therefore attention grabbing and confronting.

[4 : 37] We can't help but then try and work out what is going on. Which is exactly what those around the man did, beginning with the neighbors. They can't work out what has happened to this man.

And so they try to resolve it in their minds. We read, his neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg? Some claimed that he was. Others said, No, he only looks like him. But he himself insisted, No, 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.

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, he said. And that's not satisfactory, is it?

And so they think, if we can't find the man who healed him, then well, the next best thing is to drag him along to the experts, the Jewish leaders, and see if they can explain what's going on.

[5 : 38] So verse 13, They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus 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. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.

Now all Jesus really did is put some mud on his eyes and asked him to go and wash. Now surely, surely that cannot be considered work, can it?

It's such a small task. How can that be violating the Sabbath? And yet confronted by something they don't like, we see from the Pharisees the first of two types of common reactions.

They were blinded by their prejudice. And so immediately concluded that Jesus can't be from God. Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath.

[6 : 40] No way. Therefore, he can't be legit. And no way he can be from God. You see, for them, Sabbath keeping was the golden rule. And so anyone who breaks it can't come from God.

Except, of course, that that's never God's purpose. That was never God's purpose for the Sabbath. God's law about the Sabbath was meant to promote the well-being of his people, never to stop them from doing good.

But they were so caught up, so caught up in their own righteousness, that the Pharisees lost sight of God's design for the Sabbath. They had devised all sorts of rules around this Sabbath keeping, just to bolster their own sense of righteousness when they themselves kept it.

And so they couldn't then see past those rules to recognize the good that Jesus has just done, and therefore accept Jesus for who really is.

Well, not all the Pharisees were that blind. Some were at least willing to see that their conclusion was quite flimsy, because others asked, How can a sinner perform such signs?

[7 : 51] Good question. So they were divided. Then they turned again to the blind man. What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, He is a prophet.

And yet, instead of entertaining the possibility that this man is right, and so humble themselves, they still did not believe that he had been blind, had been born blind, and had received his sight, until they sent for the man's parents.

They question his integrity, don't they? And so they want his parents to prove it. And when they found the parents, verse 19, they asked, Is this your son? Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it now he can see? Well, we know he's our son, the parents answered, and we know he was born blind, but how he can see now, and who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He's of age. He will speak for himself.

His parents said this, because they were afraid of this, 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.

[8 : 55] Ask him. Well, here's the second type of reaction that we see from the parents. In their case, they knew full well that their son was born blind, and now he sees.

So the facts cannot be denied, really, can it? And yet, their reaction, we see, is one of being paralyzed by fear. They knew the Jewish leaders had already decided anyone who believed in Jesus would be punished.

And so, even though they know the truth, they hold back, don't they, from openly declaring it. They're afraid of the retribution and exclusion that they would experience.

The social cost for them was too great. And so, in this whole crazy merry-go-round of questions, they pass the parcel back to the blind man.

So, back to the blind man, the Pharisee goes, in verse 24, a second time, we read, 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.

[9 : 59] He replied, whether he's 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? That's a pretty audacious kind of question, isn't it?

How dare he suggest that they want to become Jesus' disciples. And so, they held insults at him and said, you are this fellow's disciple. We are the 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.

[10 : 58] His reaction is really different from his parents, isn't it? And you can understand why. Because Jesus has just totally changed his life. He was blind, and now he can see.

He was a beggar, an outcast in society. Now, he gets a totally new start. Even if the Pharisees still treat him as an outcast, for him, this was all upside from here on in, isn't it?

He has been totally changed by the power of God. And so, he cannot help but follow Jesus. Now friends, don't lose sight of what is going on here.

Because, a lot of times when we read the story, many of us would be focused on this man's physical healing. That's the wild thing that just happened. But actually, what's more significant is his faith and courage.

Notice his transformation in being given spiritual insight. He's not able to just see physically, he's also able to see spiritually now.

[12 : 06] To see past all the conventional wisdom and the pressure of the authority to understand, actually, the Pharisee's position was actually quite absurd. And that's the same with us, isn't it?

There are many experts in our world telling us what to think. They, sometimes, in the media, tell us that God of the Bible can't be true. Or if it's there, he can't be good.

And of course, they can pick things out in the Bible that don't seem to make sense on the surface, mock it, point fault at the church, and say, well, see, the Bible can't be right.

But disciples of Jesus, we don't claim that the church is perfect. We sometimes are failures as examples of God's truth. but that's why we need Jesus.

Our shortcomings does not make God a failure. It doesn't prove that Jesus isn't from God just because we are sinners.

[13 : 09] And likewise, this man could see the flaw in the Pharisee's view, can't he? I mean, what is so against Jesus? I mean, they even admit that they hardly know the man. So on what basis are they passing judgment on Jesus?

they're really only motivated by prejudice, aren't they? And yet, they can't see it. That's what I call blind or blinded by prejudice.

By contrast, this man, he's not learned, he's unsophisticated, but his logic, if you read his questions, his logic is simple but compelling, isn't it?

If Jesus is a sinner, then God would not listen to him. But since God did, even on the Sabbath, gave him the power to heal, then clearly God has no objection with Jesus.

And as he says in the last sentence, if this man were not from God, he can do nothing. Very hard to argue with that kind of logic, isn't it?

[14 : 13] Well, this man, though, still lacked one thing because he may see physically and he may have some spiritual insight, but what he does need to see as well, spiritually, is who Jesus truly is.

Not just a prophet, but as now Jesus will come and say, the Son of Man. Well, the Pharisees threw him out of the synagogue, but Jesus seeks him out to help him see this.

So, in the final exchange, which wasn't read, Jesus responds to the man by giving right understanding to his faith. And so, we pick it up again in verse 35 at the end.

Jesus finally reveals himself to the man and 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. This man is so ready to believe, isn't he? But he just needs to know who he is believing in. It's not just about having faith, but it's having faith in the right person.

[15:17] And Jesus said, You have now seen him. In fact, he's the one speaking with you. I'm the Son of Man, is what Jesus is saying. Then the man said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

Friends, as I said earlier, we can be distracted by the sensational healing of this man, but do you recall what Jesus said to the disciples right at the very start, which is on the slide, verse 3? This happens so that the works of God might be displayed in him. What exactly are these works of God being displayed? I want to suggest to you it's not just the physical side. That's just the minor part. Why? Because Jesus then goes on to say in verse 5, While I'm in the world, I am the light of the world. You see, the more important work God is doing is to reveal to the world who Jesus is.

that Jesus has come to bring light. In fact, that Jesus is the light of the world. The healing of the blind man is simply a sign pointing all of us to Jesus as the light of the world.

[16:23] That is the bigger work. That is the bigger revelation that we are all to see. And in the last three verses here, Jesus gives us a fuller explanation of this implication.

And so we read, Jesus said, For judgment I come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind. Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, What?

Are we blind too? Jesus said, If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin. But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. You see, Jesus did not come into the world so people can see physically.

We can all see now, can't we? There's the light bulb, there's the sun, Most people in Jesus' time already had physical sight. Instead, the light that Jesus speaks of is the truth. He comes so that the world does not need to live in moral and spiritual darkness or be groping around trying to find their way back to God like the Pharisees were doing, trying to keep the laws proving their moral worth but to no avail.

[17:31] Instead, Jesus comes to show us that even though we're all loved by God or made in His image, that there is nevertheless something wrong with all of us. That we're sinful.

That's the language of today's story. Spiritually blind. Our heart is full of pride, prejudice, and fear. And that stops us from doing what God wants.

We are self-righteous. And what we ought to do is be repentant. And so this man's physical blindness actually wasn't his biggest problem. It wasn't anyone's biggest problem. Jesus also needed to reveal His need for a Savior. To show him that He came not just to give him physical sight but more than that, to save him from his sins.

And this man's faith in Jesus is evidence that he wasn't able to just see physically, he could also see spiritually. By having faith in Jesus, that was the sign of spiritual sight.

[18:36] And so friends, today, if you're here for the first time, or even if it's not your first time, do you realize this same need for yourself? You may come thinking that you have some other thing you need God to do for you.

Some other form of healing maybe and may not be visible because a lot of illnesses could be internal or mental and could be invisible. Now God may or may not heal you of that illness immediately.

But, do you also see that there is a bigger need in your life? A more urgent need? That God has a bigger objective for your life than to just solve this or that problem in your life. But that actually, what he really wants to do for you and that he has done for you in Jesus is to give you spiritual sight and that is faith in his son Jesus.

You see, Jesus actually did something much more remarkable than give a blind man his sight, isn't it? You may find that hard to believe because you go, wow, that's pretty good as it is.

[19:40] If God could just, Jesus could heal me of my blindness or whatever, that would be enough for me. But the more remarkable thing that Jesus has done is that he has risen from the dead.

And he's risen from the dead so that your sins can be forgiven. This is the claim that lies at the very heart of Christianity. This is what being a Christian is all about.

Not about doing good, not about being a better person, but having Jesus die for your sins so that you might see and know the truth and come back to God.

So the question is, are you willing to believe this? Or at least, will you try to get to the bottom of this? Because Jesus then says, coming into the world as light has serious consequences for all of us.

He says here right at the end that it actually demands a response. When the blind man's neighbors, his parents and the Pharisees all heard about Jesus, that was a moment of judgment.

[20 : 45] For Jesus says, for judgment I have come into this world. And what is this judgment?

Well, it will depend on how they respond to Jesus in light of this. How they respond will determine their condition.

The blind Jesus refers to here in these last verses is not the blind man alone. But as a metaphor for all who know that they are spiritually blind, those who admit their need for Jesus, humbly depend on him and make their way back to God, will be given spiritual sight.

Will they believe and therefore receive this sight, just like the man born blind? Or will they remain in their blindness because they claim they already see and therefore have no need for Jesus?

And ironically, by saying that they see, what they remain is blind, isn't it? Blinded by fear, blinded by prejudice, blinded by indifference, whatever it is, they will feel blind because they cannot see Jesus for who he really is, the son of man, the son of God, the one that has come to save them.

And friends, that's the same for us. In the Gospel of John and throughout the Meet Jesus series, and we've had the last two as well, we've already been told who Jesus is.

[22 : 09] We're confronted by the claim that Jesus is the son of God. He's the son of man, God's Messiah and savior, who alone can save us from spiritual blindness and spiritual death.

Will you believe in him? And will you keep searching until you really work out whether that's true?

And then will you be courageous enough to look into your own life, let Jesus, the light of the world, shine his light into you to see your need for him?

That no matter how much good you're trying to do, that it's not enough, it's not enough to save you.

Friends, please don't allow prejudice or fear to stop you from coming to Jesus.

Instead, believe just like this man born blinded and come and bow down in worship to Jesus and commit your life to him as his disciple.

So friends, I wonder now if you just bow your heads. I know it's easy to just listen to this talk and yep, it's mildly stimulating maybe, but then let the moment pass.

[23 : 20] Go back to our normal lives, have that yummy chicken and chips dinner afterwards, pretend nothing has happened. But if we do this without fully considering Jesus, then we are running the risk of remaining in spiritual blindness.

And then Jesus says, your guilt remains. So why don't we just reflect quietly on what we've read tonight. And the questions I'm going to ask you are this.

Are you sure about what's going on in your life and where you're headed? Are you confident that you're on the right track? Or, will you believe Jesus is the light, the way and the truth?

And that you will come to him and allow him to give you eternal life, the eternal life that you need?

Let's just pause for a moment.

Let's just pause for a moment. Let's just pause for a moment. Let's just pause for a moment. Let's just pause for a moment. Thank you.

[24 : 50] Thank you.

Thank you.