

Truly Seeing Jesus

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[0 : 00] Well, I don't know how well you see. Perhaps you're one of those people blessed with 20-20 vision. Or perhaps not. I'm not one of those.

I actually only have one really good eye. So if I cover my good eye like this, you are now all blurry. I don't know if that's a good thing or not. I can't see who falls asleep.

So much so that when I went to have my licence renewed at VicRoads, you know how they have to do those eye tests. I had to stand at the line, so I stood at the line, and I leaned forward as far as I could and sent the letters as quickly as I could.

In fact, I've got an eye test here, actually. Let's see on the next slide, Barry. How do you go with that one? It's a joke. It's deliberately blurry. You're not losing your eyesight. It's okay. But here's the thing. Here's the point.

No matter how well we see, we all need one thing to help us, and that is light. Even if we have glasses or contacts or a magnifying glass or even 20-20 vision, no matter how good our eyes are or not, we all need light to help us see.

[1 : 14] Without light, we cannot see anything. Well, today, Jesus again calls himself the light of the world, for he is the one who helps us to see.

Not physically, of course, but spiritually. So we're at point one in your outlines and verse one in your Bible. As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or the parents that he was born blind? Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus. But this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Now, just to set the scene, the Feast of Tabernacles has just ended, where everyone was buzzing over whether Jesus was the Messiah or Christ, that means King.

And Jesus has just left the temple because the Jews tried to stone him at the end of chapter 8. I believe too, actually. But as he leaves, he sees a man born blind.

[2 : 18] And a common belief amongst the Jews of that day, reflected in the disciples, is that if you were suffering, suffering, then you deserved it because either you sinned or your parents did.

Some people still believe this today. A friend of ours, I remember, whenever she tripped over or accidentally cut herself cooking, her mum would say, oh, you must have sinned. It's not great parenting, really.

And not always true. But it is sometimes true. You see, we need to realise that there are a couple of examples in the Bible where someone's suffering is a direct result of their own sin.

And we know this in life too, don't we? You speed down Doncaster Road past the police and you get suffer a fine. Whose fault is it? And so it's an answer that's worth asking.

Is my suffering because of some unchecked and persistent sin? But it's not an answer we should always assume. Because far more often in the Bible, it says our suffering is related to living in a fallen world, where there is disease and disaster that we are caught up in.

[3 : 34] That's why Bill suffered a stroke, not because he sinned, but because we live in a fallen world. And Jesus knows this. So he says to his disciples, neither parents nor child sinned to cause this suffering.

Instead, God has planned to use it, as a result of the fallen world, he's planned to use it for good. What good? Well, he tells us in verse 3 that the works of God might be displayed.

And as we'll see by the end of the chapter, that this man might have life eternal too. That's the good. But what are these works of God? Well, they're the words and miracles of Jesus that the Father has given him to do.

So verse 4, he says, As long as it is day, we must do the works of him, 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. Now here, day refers to the time when Jesus is alive in the world, and night refers to the time when he is betrayed, arrested and crucified.

[4 : 41] And at that moment, no one can work. In fact, the disciples scatter and hide. But while he's alive, Jesus is travelling around with his disciples, doing the works God gave him to do.

You know, his words of teaching and his miraculous signs. And why is he doing these things? It's not just because the Father gave them to him, but because they help people see who he is.

And remember John's purpose statement that Annette read for us at the beginning of the service. It's here on the next slide, I think. From John chapter 20, I hope. The next slide. Yep, there it is.

John's written these things, recorded these miraculous signs. Notice the second part. But they are written that you might believe, that you might see Jesus is the Messiah, the King, the Son of God, and by believing, have life in his name.

And that's 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 come to know God as Father and see life eternal.

[5 : 55] That's what Jesus meant last week in chapter 8, verse 12. On the next slide, again, I think Annette alluded to this. He said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows or believes in me will never walk in darkness.

That is, never walk separate from God. Instead, they will have the light of, notice, life. Life eternal. Life to the full.

where we know God now and where we are going in life and where we will have physical life later in the world to come. Jesus also said later in chapter 8, which we didn't look at last week, that he has come to set us free from being slaves to sin.

On the next slide, from chapter 8, verse 34 to 36. To set us free from our sins. You see, Jesus is God's servant from Isaiah 42.

That's why we have the same Old Testament reading again this week. Because on the next slide in Isaiah 42, remember it said, a light, God would send a light to the Gentiles, the light of the world, to what?

[6 : 58] To free the prisoners, that is, of sin. And to open the eyes of the blind, that they might see, believe, and know God with life eternal.

And yet, so far in John's Gospel, it doesn't seem like many eyes have been opened, actually. It doesn't seem like many have truly seen who Jesus is and believed in him.

They healed a man in chapter 5, if you might remember, and does the man believe in Jesus? No, he goes to the Pharisees and dobs in Jesus. And then, in chapter 6, he feeds the 5,000, remember.

And lots of them follow him, and it looks like they might believe, but by the end of chapter 6, many turn away and no longer follow him, we're told.

And then he claims to be the one who gives the spirit in chapter 7, but people are still confused and undecided. And then he claims to be the light of the world last week in chapter 8, but even those who start to believe in him, chapter 8, verse 30, they are the very same ones who by the end of the chapter pick up stones to kill him.

[8 : 08] They don't believe, in other words. And so we might wonder whether Jesus' light is any good, whether he can actually help people see.

A little while ago we had a blackout at our house and so I grabbed our trusty dolphin torch, turned it on and nothing. The batteries were flat. Oh, they're still flat.

Need to fix that. Has that ever happened to you? Yes. Good, I feel better. As readers of John's gospel, it might feel like Jesus' batteries are flat.

That he says he's the light of the world that helps people see, but people aren't seeing. They aren't believing. And so John includes this miracle for us here in chapter 9 because he wants us to know that Jesus still is the light of the world, that he's actually still able to open people's eyes and help them see.

And to prove it, verse 6, after he's saying these things, that is, I'm the light of the world, he spit on the ground, made some mud with saliva and put it on the man's eyes.

[9 : 21] Go, he told them, wash in the pool of Siloam. This word means scent. So the man went and washed and came home seeing. Now, us preachers, we like a good illustration to make the point, but we ain't got nothing on Jesus, do we?

He says, I am the light of the world who enables people to see spiritually and then he backs it up by helping 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 and it's an extraordinary work of God. And yet, how will his neighbours respond?

How will the Pharisees respond? Will they see this miracle and then see who Jesus truly is or not? Well, at point two in your outlines, verse eight in your Bibles, 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 : 32] 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.

Now, this is the first of four interviews or interrogations. And each interview or interrogation shows us the response of the group. And so first, the blind man is questioned by the people, his neighbours and so on.

And we can see the response starts with disbelief, doesn't it? You know, they're not sure they've got the right guy. But when he insists he is, they ask how.

And the blind man says, well, Jesus, help me see. now, at this point, they could have started to search for Jesus themselves. I mean, it was only last week they saw him in the temple, shouting to everyone, I am the light of the world.

They're still in Jerusalem, his feast is just finished. But instead of searching for Jesus themselves, they, verse 13, brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.

[11 : 41] Now, the Pharisees were the Jewish authorities, and it seems these people weren't going to make a move without their consent. This suggests that they trusted more in human authorities than in the evidence before their eyes.

And people do that today too, don't they? Despite the evidence for Jesus, people trust more in the human authorities in their lives. I'm not just talking about government, but I'm talking about what's social media says.

People live their life often by what social media says, or what their friendship group says, or what their own religion says. And in fact, as Christians, we can fall into the same trap too, if we ignore what the Bible says and simply trust in what the church leader says.

Which is why we always ask you to open your Bibles. And it's why I always work through the passage and get you to follow with me, even though many of you I know would just say, just give me the answer.

But I want you to see and trust in God's authority, not human authority. But despite the evidence, the people refuse to search for Jesus, and instead they trust in the Jewish authorities.

[12 : 56] And so what will these authorities say? Well, we come to the next interview, verse 14. 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. Some of the Pharisees said, oh, 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. Here is the second interview, as I said, and the man is questioned by the Pharisees.

They ask him how he was healed, and they realise that Jesus worked on the Sabbath. According to their laws, making mud was one type of work, and healing another person was a second type of work.

So instead of seeing a work of God, they see two works that break their laws. They've totally missed the point, haven't they? On the next slide is a sign for a Sabbath elevator, in English and then in Hebrew underneath.

[14 : 04] And every Saturday, which is the Jewish Sabbath, the elevator kicks into Sabbath mode, stops at each floor. Why? Well, that way the Jews don't have to do the work of pressing a button.

True story. But they've missed the point, haven't they? The Sabbath is about remembering God's rest that we look forward to in the new creation. And so also the Jewish authorities have missed the point of the miracle, that Jesus is the Messiah.

Of course, some others in verse 16 ask how a sinner could do such miracles, which sounds like they're pro-Jesus, doesn't it? Until we look down to verse 22, at the end of verse 22, where we see that the Jewish leaders had already decided that Jesus was not to be acknowledged as the Messiah.

Messiah. And so this division here in verse 16 is not between those who are pro-Jesus and those who are not. It's a division between the best way to explain the miracle without accepting the obvious, that Jesus is the Messiah.

Which explains why in verse 17, then they turned again to the blind man, what have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, oh, he is a prophet.

[15 : 26] You see, the Pharisees refused to accept the obvious conclusion that the evidence points to and they looked for any other explanation, asking the man to see if he's got a better proposal than they've got.

And again, people do that today, don't they? I often mention we have lots of evidence for Jesus as being the Son of God for his resurrection and so on. But because people simply can't or don't want to believe it, they reject the evidence and look for any other explanation, even lesser ones.

And that's what the Pharisees again do. So verse 18, we come to the third interview where they put in the parents. They still did not believe that he had been blind and he had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

Is this your son? They asked. Is this the one who say was born blind? How is it that he now 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's of age, he will speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders who had already decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

[16 : 41] That is why his parents said he's of age, ask him. Here's the third interview and notice how the parents don't want to be drawn in to the discussion, do they?

Why? Well, they're afraid of being excommunicated from the synagogue. And to be fair, this was much more serious than it might be today. Back then, the synagogue was the centre of community life, much like the church used to be here in Australia.

And so for the parents to be kicked out meant being kicked out of their community, losing friends, losing job opportunities and work and even family members. And for fear of losing all this, the parents refused to be drawn in despite the evidence of their son standing right before them.

And again, I know people like this today. One of my wife's friends was convinced of the evidence of Christ, started coming to church with us, but then her non-Christian friends and family teased her and fearing the loss of their respect, she refused to inquire any longer or follow Jesus anymore.

It is hard, but the evidence reminds us it is worth it, for Jesus really is the Messiah. He gives us life in his name. But the Pharisees refused to see it themselves, so they dragged the man in again, which is the fourth interview, and becomes an interrogation.

[18 : 06] So verse 24, a second time they summoned the man who had been born blind, give glory to God by telling the truth, they said, we know this man is a sinner. You notice they kind of put on the pressure?

The irony, of course, is they don't even give glory to God, because they refuse to accept the truth about his son. But despite the pressure, the man does not cave in. Verse 25, he replied, whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know.

But one thing I do know, I was blind, but now I see. What a great line. It's part of a great hymn too, isn't it? And it's not a bad tactic if we are talking to people.

And notice how the man doesn't get drawn into their arguments about whether he's a sinner or not, but he just sticks to his personal testimony, the evidence he has. Which means, by the way, it's worth all of us having a go at our own personal testimony, how God might have led us to Christ or how God might have worked in our lives, so that if the opportunity comes up, we can share it, because people today are much more interested in your story than what the church says.

I mean, the Royal Commission has done a good job of that. And what's more, personal stories are harder to refute, like the Pharisees here.

[19 : 25] And so they try a different tact. And they become like police officers in an interrogation, asking the same questions of the man again, to see if his story changes. Verse 26, And then they asked him, what did he do to you?

How did he open your eyes? The man answered, I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too? 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. 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 are steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us? And they threw him out of the synagogue.

[20 : 34] Who says the Bible is never funny? of course, the Pharisees get angrier and angrier as this man continues to stick to his evidence. And it might seem like the man is putting it to them, and he is a bit, I think, but he's simply pointing out what's logical.

If Jesus was not from God, how could he do such an extraordinary thing? No one has ever heard of that happening before. opening eyes, someone who's gone blind and could see first, then blind, then see again, yeah, but not from birth.

And yet the Pharisees refused to listen to logic. Instead, they resort to a personal tact, did you notice? You were steeped in sin at birth, how dare you lecture us? And sadly, that seems to be our society today, doesn't it?

You can't seem to have an open dialogue or discussion about Jesus without people getting personal. I mean, it was only two years ago when Cooper's Beer released some beers celebrating the Bible Society's 200th birthday.

Do you remember that? And some of the beer boxes had verses from John's Gospel, like the next slide. But because it was around the time of the marriage debate, there was outrage.

[21 : 53] A pubs poured Cooper's beer down the street drain, which I would have thought was littering, actually. And there was personal tax on social media. But all they were trying to do was keep it light, hence light beer, and have a discussion about Christianity and marriage.

But it seems as though our society has left reason and logic behind. Instead, it resorts to personal tax if they don't like what you say. One of the other cartons on the next slide, it's a bit hard to see the verse on this carton, so I've put it on the bottom of the slide, but it actually has the verse from John 1 about the light shining in the darkness, and the darkness not overcoming it.

And yet, it feels a bit like the darkness has overcome the light. It feels like Jesus' batteries have gone a little flat.

The light of the world is not really helping many people to see. Well, does he? Yes. Point three. You see, Jesus has been helping this man to see spiritually throughout the whole passage.

The man kept coming back to the miracle Jesus performed, and the more he was interrogated, the more he believed. Did you notice? So verse 11, he starts off by saying, the man called Jesus.

[23 : 13] Then in verse 17, he says, Jesus is a prophet. Kind of one step up. And then in verse 33, when he's pushed again or persecuted again, he says, Jesus must be from God.

You see, Jesus has been helping him to see spiritually by performing this miracle at the start and then actually letting him face some interrogation. Which means, by the way, that we should never run away from being questioned for our faith.

I don't miss him, we don't go looking for persecution, but if it comes, take heart, because God will use it to grow us. But the point here is, as the light of the world, Jesus not only enabled him to see physically, but is enabling him to see spiritually throughout the passage.

The darkness has not overcome the light of Jesus. He still gives light and helps people see who he is. Verse 35, 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. I hear Jesus finds the man, takes the initiative, finds the man, asks him if he believes.

[24 : 28] We need to remember at this point that the man has never seen Jesus with his new eyes. He knows a guy called Jesus healed him, but he's never seen Jesus with his own eyes.

And perhaps he has heard, though, that Jesus went around calling himself the Son of Man, because he's ready to believe in this Son of Man. He just needs to know who it is.

And so Jesus says, verse 37, 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 here deliberately uses the word, seen me, because now the man not only sees Jesus physically, but sees Jesus spiritually, as the one from God, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the King.

For he believes and worships Jesus, doesn't he? And by believing in Jesus, this man also now has life eternal with God.

[25 : 32] You see, Jesus' batteries are not flat. He can still enable some to see. It's just that at the same time he enables some to see, it also means some are blinded.

God. This is the nature of his ministry, it divides. Have a look at verse 39, which is really the summary verse for the chapter, and explains his ministry, why some don't believe and some do.

Verse 39, Jesus said, for judgment I have come into the world, so that the blind will see, and those who think they see will become blind.

Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, what, are we blind to? Jesus said, if you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin. But now that you claim you can see, well, you've become blinded and your guilt remains.

See, Jesus has come for judgment, not to punish, but to arbitrate, to divide between those who are blind and those who see. To the blind he will give sight, but to those who think they see, he will make blind.

[26 : 44] For as the light of the world, that's what light does. I mean, we've all had those two experiences, haven't we? At night, you're in the kitchen, you want to see something, you turn on the light and you can see everything, including the cockroaches that scurried across the floor.

The light helps you to see. But we've also had the experience, I would imagine, when it's been dark for a while, then someone turns on the bright light and you kind of blind, you squint, you cover your eyes and go, do I really have to get up now?

And that's what Jesus' ministry does. To those like this blind man who don't claim to know everything but humbly act on the evidence, Jesus enables them to see.

But to those like the Pharisees who arrogantly claim they think they know who Jesus is, a sinner, and so refuse to look at the evidence, well, Jesus blinds them.

If in verse 41 they were more like the blind man who humbly acted on the evidence, then they would have truly seen who Jesus is and be forgiven of their sins. But since they claimed to see, since they thought they knew who Jesus was as a sinner, then they remain in their guilt and spiritual blindness.

[27 : 58] Jesus simply confirms it, you see. I remember going surfing with a guy from work, back when I could stand up on a surfboard, but we were in his car and I remember mentioning something about Jesus and before I even finished the sentence, he cut me off and said rather harshly, don't ever talk to me about that again.

You see, he had no interest in hearing any evidence. He was already sure he knew who Jesus was, in his words, a waste of time. So he claimed to see that's who Jesus was according to him.

And so any mention of Jesus simply confirmed his blindness, don't ever talk to me that again. That's what the gospel of Jesus does. On the other hand, though, a number of years ago, well, I've seen lots of people become Christians, but one stands out in particular.

He was from our old church, he was interested in a girl at our church, and so he started coming, the girl said, rightly so, look, I'm not going to go out with you because you're not a Christian. He had already planned to go overseas, so he left and he had to think, actually, I'm really interested in this girl, I better check out what Christians believe.

believe, and he was in Canada, reading the Bible in his room alone, and he saw who Jesus was and believed. Texted his, can I go out with you now?

[29 : 18] No, I wasn't quite like that. For those who like a happy ending, they did end up together and I married them. But you see, John wants us to know that Jesus' batteries are not flat, it's just that as the light of the world, it does two things.

He does help some see, but to those who refuse to look at the evidence, well, he blinds them too. And so if you're not a Christian here this morning, do you truly see Jesus?

Or are you like the Pharisees and the world who claim they know who he is, you know, just a good teacher, or some outdated figure, or simply a waste of time? Or will you be like the blind man who doesn't claim to know everything but looks at the evidence and at Jesus in his word?

Because if you do that, then you'll truly see Jesus and find life in his name. And for us who were once blind but now see, then firstly, do we give thanks for God's amazing grace that he has enabled us to see through the gospel of Jesus, the light of Jesus?

And secondly, do we continue to see Jesus clearly as our king and savior, as the one whose death paid for our sins so that we could be forgiven and given life with God? Do we continue to see him clearly such that we continue to worship him rightly, like the blind man did?

[30 : 42] Not physically bowing before him but submitting our will to his word and serving him in our lives? I know there's a number of folks here for whom getting to church is a massive effort, and yet because you see Jesus clearly, then you make the effort joyfully.

it's terrific. Or a friend of mine who struggles to see physically and yet he sees Jesus spiritually very clearly, so much so that he works hard to bring up his kids to know Jesus, to encourage them to go to youth group and church even when they don't want to go, and not to do sport on Sundays so they miss those things.

Do we continue to see Jesus clearly for who he is and so worship him rightly? Or over time have we developed spiritual cataracts? You know what cataracts are?

It makes our vision blind, cloudy rather. And so has our vision of Jesus become a bit cloudy so that we don't see him clearly as king and therefore don't serve him with our lives completely but only when it's convenient?

Or we see Jesus a little less clearly as our saviour so we serve him begrudgingly rather than joyfully remembering what he's done for us? If so we need to keep coming back to the light, keep coming back to Jesus in his word for he will help us see him clearly and so worship him rightly.

[32 : 11] And lastly will we keep doing what we can to help others meet Jesus in his word? Remember John wants us to know that Jesus is still the light of the world, he's still the way and the means to help people see.

And so will we do all we can to help people come to the light, come to Jesus in the Bible that they might see as well? And don't be discouraged that some will remain in blindness like my mate from work because others will see like that person from church.

So don't be discouraged, instead pray that God would soften hard hearts, share your personal testimony if possible, point people to the evidence we have or perhaps support those who can do it if you can't.

I mean Easter is not far away, Easter eggs and hot cross buns have been in the shops for a while, I think two days since Christmas, after Christmas. Why not, if you're having afternoon tea with some friends, buy some hot cross buns and just point out that Easter is really meaningful for you and see if they bite in both senses.

Or perhaps invite them to a service or pray for the services. We have to do whatever we can to help people come to Jesus in his word. For he is still the light of the world who helps people see who he is, that they might believe and see life with God.

[33 : 39] Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we thank you for the reminder this morning that Jesus is the light of the world. Father, we know that while not everyone believes in him, we know that his ministry divides.

It confirms spiritual blindness for those who refuse to look at the evidence. But he does help others to see who humbly come to him. And so Father, we pray that you would help us to continue to see Jesus clearly for who he is.

And so worship him joyfully with our lives. And we pray that you would help us also to do what we can to bring others to the light, to Jesus in his word, that they too might see and have life.

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