

Can you see?

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Date: 11 February 2024

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[0 : 00] Tyler, thank you. You will be changed. As you come face to face with the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, you really will be changed personally and deeply.

! I think that's the wonderful yet dangerous message of John chapter 9. Did you see at the end there in 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.

You can't get a bigger change than that, almost. As Jesus comes into the world, the blind will see. That is a massive, wonderful change in a person's life. When through Jesus your blind eyes are opened to the light and to God.

And yet on the other hand, faced with Jesus and his teaching, those who claim they can see will become blind.

That is a scary change. A terrible change. To say, I can see, yet be plunged more deeply into guilty spiritual darkness.

[1 : 26] For judgment I have come into this world, Jesus says, so that the blind will see, and those who see will become blind. I wonder this morning, how will you and I be changed?

Because we will be changed by Jesus and his teaching, one way or the other. So come back to the beginning of John chapter 9 on page 1075, the beginning of our reading.

Let me explain what's going on. We're right in the middle of the public ministry of Jesus, recorded for us here in John's Gospel. What we've just read here, this is John's trustworthy eyewitness account of what took place in history 2,000 years ago.

Jesus has been teaching in Jerusalem, the capital city. He's been saying, I've come from God, I'm the son of God, listen to me. But lots of people are against him.

And at the end of chapter 8, do you see, people picked up stones to stone him. But Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. Now, in chapter 9, verse 1, as Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

[2 : 47] I wonder if you know what that feels like. This time a year ago, even though I'm only 48, I had cataract surgery on my right eye. And in the six months before that, my vision had become more and more blurry.

I was really frustrated. I was tired. And you'll have heard me say lots and lots, this is hard that I can't see properly out of one eye. But it's nothing like being blind from birth.

I wonder if you can imagine. Never having seen the sun, or the sky, or flowers, or people you love. Your whole life to this point in the dark and cut off.

This blind man is reduced to sitting and begging on the street. He is helpless. So here he is, he is blind from birth, and Jesus saw him. And then a conversation happens, a chat.

His disciples say, Rabbi, teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? It is so common to imagine that if someone is disabled, it's their fault in some way, or their parents' fault.

[4 : 02] But Jesus says, no, no, no, no, no. Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus. But this happens so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

As long as it's 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.

What Jesus says is very weighty. Jesus says, I am going to display God's works in this man.

I'm going to do something to him. I'm going to do something in him that is God at work, because I am the light of the world. Well, here are three things that I will want us to see from this chapter this morning.

Here's the first thing this chapter shows us. Jesus, the Son of God, opens blind eyes. You know, what takes place here at the start is a miracle.

[5 : 09] It's a sign. It's told so simply. Look, verse five. While I'm in the world, I am the light of the world. And after saying this, he spat on the ground and made some mud with the saliva, and he put it on the man's eyes.

Go, he told him, wash in the pool of Siloam, which means scent. Why would he do it like that? Maybe he's connecting with the blind man very personally and memorably, touching him, pressing in the warm mud and speaking.

Maybe it's something more. When God created people right back at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 2, the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Here, Jesus, God the Son, works with dust, works with breath, works with spit, and he makes a new man.

Whatever's going on, with his eyes caked in mud, the man obeyed Jesus and went and he washed and he came home seeing. What are you meant to conclude about Jesus?

[6 : 33] In our clever and enlightened 21st century, we think that believing in miracles is just kind of a bit childish, really.

Miracles are things that simple first century people might fall for back in dark times, but not really for people like us today who are rational and scientific.

And yet here, publicly, openly, a straight-up miraculous sign that's undeniable. This is God at work. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, acting in power. In John's eyewitness account, he's already turned water into wine.

Jesus has already cured a boy who was close to death. He's already healed a man who was paralysed for 38 years. And he fed 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish.

[7 : 33] And now he opens blind eyes. Many years before Jesus, the Old Testament prophets had promised this would happen.

When God's King, the Messiah, comes, in that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of the gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see.

It was a promise. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, it said. And now, here is Jesus doing exactly that.

So let me ask, straightforwardly this morning, who do you say that Jesus is? And we're here this morning, a group of different people from all over the place, different backgrounds, different cultures, and we've been told different things about Jesus, and we've read different things.

He's not just a man. You can't say that. He's not just a prophet. You mustn't think that. No, no, Jesus is from God, and he does the work of God.

[8 : 45] He is the Son of God, who opens people's blind eyes. That's the first thing. There is more to say, though, here in this story.

And let me just say it like this. What goes on here is, it's not just that Jesus changes this man physically, opening his eyes.

He also changes him spiritually in relation to God. As Jesus gives this man physical sight, opening his eyes to see the world around him, he also gives him spiritual sight, to see and know God, and be restored to a relationship with God forever.

And what Jesus does in this blind man in this chapter, he also does in people like you and me today. This is the wonderful work of God.

I want to show us this. I said there are three things to notice in this chapter. Firstly, Jesus, the Son of God, opens blind eyes. It's a miracle. He opens people's eyes.

[9 : 59] Secondly, that we may see him and believe in him and worship him. Let me show you what I mean.

Just back a page in John's Gospel. In John 8, verse 12, Jesus said very famously, it's on the screen here, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. This is really important. In the 21st century, lots of us like to think that we are enlightened spiritual people, or at least that we see things clearly.

But Jesus says no. Jesus teaches that by ourselves, without him, we walk in darkness, as those who are blind.

Not only have you and I never seen our creator, we have also turned away from the light, from the God who made us. We are people, Jesus says, who sin.

[11 : 13] We live as we want to. We don't love God as we should. We walk in darkness. And as human beings, with our eyes clamped shut, we're cut off from God, and blind, and heading for death.

But in his kindness, Jesus has come as the light of the world. He's come to open the eyes of people who are blind and living in darkness.

And that's what happens in John chapter 9. It's not just that this man can now see. Jesus opens his eyes that he might see Jesus and worship and follow him.

We won't read all the conversation together, but let me just point out a couple of things. From verse 7 onwards in the story, Jesus disappears, and the man is left to fend for himself.

And now the questions start to come to him. In verses 8 to 12, he has a conversation with his neighbours. They say, how were your eyes opened? And in verse 11, he says, the man they called Jesus made some mud and put it on my eye.

[12 : 34] Well, that's true. In verses 13 to 17, the Jewish religious leaders interrogate the man. What went on? What do you say about the man who opened your eyes?

And at the end of verse 17, the man replied about Jesus, he is a prophet. Things are becoming clearer to him. After a conversation between the leaders and the parents, again, the leaders interrogate the man.

Look what happens in verse 28 at the bottom of the page. Then they hurled their 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. And the man answered, that is remarkable. You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.

We know that God 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.

[13 : 47] What is happening for this man? His eyes are being opened. This man called Jesus, he called him. A prophet, he called him.

He is from God. And then finally, in verses 35 to 38, everything comes together. It's such an amazing conversation of spiritual discovery and arrival.

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out and when he found him, Jesus searched out and he found this man. 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. And Jesus said, you have now seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you.

And the man said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. He worshipped Jesus.

[14 : 50] I don't know about you, I love to see a before and an after transformation. A before to an after.

And lots of people love that. On Facebook and YouTube, I keep being shown clips of men. And I must have clicked on this at some point. There is always a before picture of a man who maybe is extremely overweight and pasty and puffing and unfit.

And then a year later, after a controlled diet and time in the gym, it's the same man, but he's lean and tanned and healthy. And all the comments below say, that's great work, well done.

Or, think of one of those home makeover programs like Grand Designs or DIY SOS. Before, there's a grimy shell of a room with a half-finished disaster and a dad who's looking sheepish.

He's left it and the place can't be lived in. And then a special team arrives and a couple of weeks later, the camera comes again to a room that's been completely changed.

[16 : 05] Everything's fixed and painted and fresh and cosy with a candle and nice cushions. And the family are so overjoyed and the makeover team come in and they give them a round of applause for their great work.

What a change before and after. What a wonderful thing that's happened. Here in John chapter 9, it's not a body that's been changed or a room that's been transformed, but a whole human being. Before, he was blind, helpless, cut off, begging, walking in darkness and heading for death. After, what a transformation.

He's a new man. His eyes have been opened. He's no longer in the dark. He's faced insults and rejection. He has met Jesus Christ and seen him and believed in him and bowed down in worship before his Lord and his God.

Jesus says, I am the light of the world and whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

[17 : 22] And that is what this man now has. He's been changed and restored. He has the light of life. He has eternal life and he will never walk in darkness, but will see and know God for all of forever.

And here's the thing about this enormous change. It's not well done to you, blind man. This is the work of God displayed in his life.

Jesus, the Son of God, opens the eyes of people like us who are spiritually blind that we may see him and believe in him and worship him.

this is what God does. This is God's grand design. It's why he sent his Son into the world to die for and to work in those who walk in darkness that we might have the light of life and be transformed forever.

I hope this grabs you. For many of us, it will connect with our lived experience.

[18 : 35] How extraordinary that God would work in someone like me and open my eyes to him and draw me to Jesus and give me life.

Christians sing, in fact, we've sung for centuries, a very famous song called Amazing Grace. We're going to sing it at the end. This is the first verse.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. I was blind, but now I see.

If you're not yet a Christian believer, this is what the living God can do in you. Take you from darkness and give you light and life as you follow him.

And yet, well, here's the twist in John 9, or the other side, if you like. In this chapter, not all come to Jesus and see and receive life.

[19 : 52] Because here is verse 39 again. Jesus said, for judgment I've come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

Face to face with Jesus and his teaching, there are people like this blind man today who will receive spiritual sight. And at the same time, both in Jesus' day and today, those who see will become blind.

As we draw things together, I said three things to see from this chapter. Jesus, the Son of God, opens blind eyes. He does it so we will see him and believe in him and worship him and yet at the same time see Jesus blinding those who claim they can see.

Do you know who that is in this chapter? It's the Jewish religious leaders. It's the authorities. It's the clever elite of their day.

people who are absolutely certain they can see very clearly for themselves and who will not come to Jesus Christ. And the more they come face to face with Jesus and his words and his teaching, the more tightly they screw up their eyes, cover up their eyes, are blinded.

[21 : 28] It is very scary to see this. I just want to point us to a couple of things. These Pharisees, these religious leaders in this chapter, they can't deny that Jesus has opened this man's eyes and they conduct an interrogation.

First, with the man. They ask him in verse 15 how he received his sight. He put mud on my eyes, the man replied, and I washed and now I see and some of the Pharisees, the leaders said, this man is not from God, he does not keep the Sabbath.

They smear Jesus. In verses 18 to 23, these leaders grab the man's parents. Is this your son? Is this the one you say was born blind?

How can he now see? The parents say, why don't you just ask him? In verse 22, his parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

These people have made up their closed minds in advance. No to Jesus. No to anyone who says he's the Messiah will get rid of them, which is very up to date, screwing up their eyes tighter and tighter.

[23 : 01] We do not want to see, we won't see. None of us would be like that, would we? We're almost there.

In verse 24 onwards, they summon the man a second time. They stand tall, they're very certain, and they bully him. Give glory to God by telling the truth, they say.

We know this man Jesus is a sinner. It's exactly the kind of pressure that Christians in Britain and around the world can face from the authorities.

But I love this bit of the conversation. The man replied, whether he's a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know is I was blind, but now I see.

What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? He said, I've told you already and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?

[24 : 05] That's so cheeky. Then they hurled insults at him. And over the page in verse 34, finally, to this they replied, you were steeped in sin at birth.

How dare you lecture us? And they threw him out. They don't think, they won't think, they are hardened and certain and blind.

And so we've made it. In verse 39, Jesus said, for judgment I've come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

And some of the leaders who were with him heard him say this and they said, are we blind too? And Jesus said, the very last verse, if you were blind, if you recognised that you are in the dark and you need Jesus, you would no longer be guilty of sin.

But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. Well, it's a very deep chapter and it's important for all of us.

[25 : 22] I don't know what you make this morning of the claims of Jesus Christ. I want to say to you, he is the light of the world. The evidence that he is God the Son is clear and compelling.

He is the Son of God who lived and died and was raised and reigns today as Lord of all. And today in the 21st century all around the world he continues to do the work of God in men and women, giving spiritual sight to those who are blind and walking in darkness.

Please don't claim that you can see and so reject him. Don't do that. instead come to Jesus humbly. Pray to him today because he is alive and reigning and can hear us. Pray to him, Lord Jesus Christ, open my eyes to know you.

Please give me light. Please give me life. And then believe in him and follow him and worship him because this son of God, Jesus Christ, he is the light of the world and whoever follows him will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

[26 : 52] I'm going to lead us in a prayer. Let's pray together. for judgment I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

Thank you almighty God for sending into the world your son Jesus Christ. Thank you for his power. Thank you that he was able to open the eyes of this man who had not seen forever.

Thank you that to all of us who walk in darkness who are cut off from you and blind thank you that Jesus is able to work in us and give us light and life as we follow him.

Please save all of us from being proud and hard and claiming that we can see. Help us to come humbly to Jesus Christ to have our eyes opened and to have life forever we pray in Jesus name. Amen.