

Light Has Come to the Spiritually Blind

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[0 : 0 0] um today is the first sunday of epiphany um we just had christmas a couple weeks ago in case you were wondering in case you missed it it was uh december 25th it was great and uh leading up to christmas we had four weeks of advent where we were preparing for and looking forward to december 25th um and everything culminated in december 25th when we celebrated the fact that the lord of glory came down in the humility of a manger and he came down god with us to save us december 25th was a great day but really quickly boxing day happened on december 26th all the sales went up and everybody went to the stores and started shopping again family gatherings were happening my wife suzy and i got on an airplane early on the boxing day morning and we went to california to visit family and what often happens is that we prepare for christmas and we culminate in christmas and then we just move on really really quickly but epiphany the season of epiphany is designed to be a period of four or five weeks that causes us to pause and actually think about what has happened on december 25th it causes us to pause and think about the fact that the light of the world jesus christ has entered into our darkness and it causes us to pause and actually receive that light into our lives so this image of light is particularly significant in the time of epiphany and this image of light is not is something that captured the apostle john and it's strewn all throughout his gospel in in our passage in verse five jesus himself says as long as i am in the world i am the light of the world and in our passage we see jesus the light of the world coming into the darkness of a blind man and shining his light and when he shines his light two things happen a blind beggar is healed and receives sight and then everybody else in the scene sees the light and is offended by it is scandalized by it and they go deeper into darkness so the light shines in the darkness and one person is healed and the rest go deeper into the darkness let's begin with verse one jesus sees a blind beggar as he passed by he saw a man blind from birth i love how this passage starts it starts with the fact that jesus sees a man who cannot see jesus this passage is all about a blind man restoring sight a blind man receiving his sight again but before he can ever see jesus sees him and i want to suggest to you that this blind man is actually representative of all of us before christ came to us we were spiritually blind spiritually beggars without christ without hope in the world we were groping in the darkness looking for any ray of light or truth or hope or meaning and we look for it in all kinds of places didn't we we looked for it amongst friends or social groups or romantic relationships but we couldn't find it we looked for it in work and academic success we looked for it in our job to in our job titles in our degrees but couldn't find it we look for it in our money and our status in our bank accounts and our pension plans and yet we still

can't find it there without the lord jesus christ we are just like this blind beggar groping in the darkness we can't see the light and yet jesus sees us he saw us before we could ever see him and this is one of the great truths of the christian life is that christian the christian life does not begin with us seeing the lord but with the lord seeing us he is the light of the world and he comes into our darkness he is the light of the world who's come to this man and this man has no idea what's about to happen to him jesus is going to heal him look at verses six and seven having said these things jesus spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva he anointed the man's eyes with mud and said to him go wash in the pool of siloam which means scent so he went and washed and came back seeing can you imagine the disciples in this situation looking at jesus spitting in the dirt being like jesus why are you making clay why are you making mud why are you playing in the dirt again and then putting it on this man's eyes and being like oh goodness where where is this going this is a gong show um but it's quite amazing it's so earthy that he touches this man then he says go and wash this man doesn't can't see who this is and yet he goes to the pool and he washes and he comes back seeing and the amazing thing about this is that jesus didn't restore something to this man that he once had he didn't see and then become blind and now he sees again he has never seen before so what jesus is doing here is something that only god can do jesus is creating out of nothing he's given the man what he's never had before sight sight and this is good news brothers and sisters this is good news for us because we don't have to bring anything to the lord for him to do something with us because he creates out of nothing and so if you have nothing to offer you're welcome because he's going to do something in you if you feel like you don't have anything to give to god or he has nothing to work with that's okay because god can create out of nothing and he does it all the time and he wants to do it for you he wants to heal you that's why paul calls christians new creations for anyone who is in christ he is a new creation but when the light shines in the darkness it not only heals darkness but it creates a fence the light shines in the darkness and it creates a crisis for the darkness and this is what we get in verse in the in the big middle section of this passage verses eight to 34 it's all about the crisis that the darkness is in when the light when it's confronted by the light and what does the darkness do it takes the light to court this whole scene is one big lawsuit literally it's one big lawsuit john has designed it that way verses eight to 34 jesus is taken is put on trial by innumerable people jesus is no longer on the initiative he takes the back he's on the back of the stage in this point and it's as if everybody is prosecuting him they focus on what jesus has done for this man and what that says about his identity verses eight to twelve the healed man is questioned by his neighbors the neighbors cannot wrap their

minds around the radical change that has happened in this man's life by the light and so what they do is they say let's take him to the authorities let's take him to the authorities they know what to do with this they can figure it out so that's what they do then verses 13 to 17 the neighbors bring the healed man to the pharisees for interrogation this is the first round of interrogation and what do the pharisees do they say how did this happen and he says jesus he says they say there's no way that's possible this man's sinner and so what the religious authorities end up doing is they refuse to call the light what it is light rather they decide to call him a sinner and choose to declare him to be their enemy and and then in verses 18 to 23 the pharisees call in more witnesses they say let's bring this man's parents to us and so they bring the healed man's parents and they say so what do you know about the situation they're like well he's our son um he was born blind but how in the world this happened we have no idea and they push further but his parents are trembling with fears they're afraid of the religious authorities they're afraid of the powers that be and they're afraid of siding with jesus because they know of the severe consequences so instead of responding and siding with jesus they simply avoid making the decision and pass it off to the son once again and then in verses 24 to 34 the pharisees call in the healed man for interrogation round two the second round but they use the same tactic they call jesus a sinner they use their authority to try to crush the light the darkness judges the light and so at the end of this long long trial we have the darkness judging the light calling jesus a sinner and then excommunicating the man who was healed you gotta think this man being excommunicated was a big deal i mean now he's thinking great i've been healed of my sight but now i've been cast out of the religious community that takes care of me and is all my social well-being and relationships they are the people that support me financially and they are my community now i've shamed my family and now i'm a wandering outcast what in the world am i going to do now that i have my sight but then jesus does something quite amazing jesus goes searching for this rejected man look in verse 34 i mean 35 jesus heard that they had cast him out and having found him he said just pause right there having heard that they cast him out jesus goes to find this man i love this about jesus jesus is not okay with just healing and leaving it at that in this situation jesus wants to seek out this man who has been rejected and he wants to establish face-to-face relationship with him up to this point this man has not yet seen jesus face jesus has seen him and jesus has healed him but he has not seen jesus face and so he finds him he finds him i think william temple who was archbishop of canterbury a few years back was right when he said that this is one of the deepest truths of christianity listen to what he says he says the man who is driven out by the pharisaic court is not left to wander as an outcast jesus finds him man did not find jesus but jesus found him

and that is the deepest truth of the christian faith that jesus finds us our fellowship with him is rooted in his pursuit of us we were lost if it were not for the gracious compassion of the living god we once were lost but then jesus came and found us and when jesus finds this man he asks him a really simple question he says do you believe in the son of man and the man replies and says who is he sir that i may believe in him jesus replies you've seen him and it is he who is speaking to you the man sees his savior and he falls down and worships and says lord i believe and right here is a great turning point in this whole passage up to this point in verses 8 through 30 8 through 34 jesus is the one that has been on trial but then in this verse we discover that jesus is the son of man and you have to know that this title son of man that jesus chooses for himself comes from the book of daniel and in the book of daniel the son of man is the one who receives power from god to judge all the nations of the world so when he says yes i am the son of man he's saying i am the true judge of the world the tables have been turned i was put on trial but actually i am the true judge and now i am going to pronounce my judgment and it is far different than the judgment that the pharisees made it's exactly the opposite jesus verdict is exactly the opposite look at verse 39 for judgment i came into this world this is the true judge speaking that those who do not see may see and that those who see may become blind when the light of jesus shines into the dark world two things happen those who are blind see and those who see become blind now these two categories it's important to realize are referring to very unique things those who are blind and see those who are blind see this means the blind are those people who are who are who are who are who are who are blind and see and recognize their need for the light of jesus christ and jesus gives it to them so they can see whereas those who claim to see are those who do not recognize that they actually are blind and in need of the light of jesus christ and thus they remain in the darkness of their sin and they become blind so when it says the blind see it means the blind recognize they need the light and jesus gives them the light when it says that those who see become blind it means they do not recognize that they need the light and thus they remain in the darkness and notice in verse 41 what jesus says to these people to the blind he declares his verdict and says you are not guilty but to those who say they can see he says to them you your gate guilt remains with you the blind are not guilty and those who claim to see become guilty and this is one of the great paradoxes of christianity those who recognize they need the light and they're walking in the darkness get to go free an 18th century english man named john newton understood this understood this really well

he understood that those who are on the light are those who recognize they actually are blind and they need the light he lived in the 18th century he was a man who spent much of his youth seeking after sexual passion he was a man who spent much of his free time creatively coming up with ways to blaspheme the name of the living god he was a man who was involved in the african slave trade business treating human beings as animals to be captured and tamed bought and sold he was blind to his own darkness but that changed on march 10th 1784 when he woke up in the middle of the night to a on the on a ship that was being battered by a storm and as water flooded into the boat and it seemed like his life was about to end it was at that moment when the light of god flooded into his heart and true life finally began he recognized in that moment that he had been blind and he was deeply in need of mercy four years later he wrote in reflection on this experience he wrote in his diary these words the reason for god's mercy is unknown to me but this one thing i know i once was blind and now i see and those are the words that would eventually develop into the greatest hymn that has ever been written in all of history amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me i once was lost but now i'm found i once was blind but now i see and i'm here to tell you brothers and sisters that know how dark no matter how dark your past has been no lot no matter how long that darkness has lasted no matter how long you've been bound by the chins the chains of sin jesus is offering you amazing grace tonight and so will you consider yourself a slave and experience the radical freedom of jesus christ will you consider yourself lost and discover the joy of being found by jesus christ will you consider yourself blind and discover the great love of god flowing into your heart through the face of jesus christ because we all need it amazing grace how sweet the sound has saved a wretch like me i once was lost but now i'm found was blind but now i see in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit amen