John 9:1-23

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[0:00] Friends, while you're standing, let's pray. Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this morning.! In Christ's name, Amen. Yes, please be seated.

Good morning, everyone. Good morning, good morning. It's really nice to see you all. If you don't know me, my name is Aaron Roberts. I'm one of the ministers here on staff. And we're looking at John 9. I remember when I was a younger man being at a party, and somebody handed me a pair of glasses.
And they said, try these on. I did not wear glasses at the time. This was in my 20s. And I put them on, and we all had a bit of a laugh about how our faces look quite different with glasses. But then I remember I had the glasses on, and I picked up a can of soda that was on the kitchen table, and I looked at it closely, and I realized for the first time in my life I could actually read the really little print on the back, you know, where it's manufactured.
I thought, I didn't think anyone could read that. Like, I just thought they printed those words blurry. Sometimes we're blind, and we don't realize it.
And that's one of the big issues here in John 9. The religious experts were spiritually blind, and they got worse as the story goes.
[1:20] Whereas the blind man began to see Jesus, and through the story gets clearer and clearer on him. And I want to show you that in the passage tonight.

So what we're going to do over the next sort of 15 minutes or so is I'm going to walk through this story. It's quite a long story. I'm going to walk through it as if it was a play with scenes.
There are six distinct scenes. So let's go through them, and then at the end I'll kind of pull it all together. Okay, so scene one.
Jesus and his disciples, they're walking down the road, and they pass by a blind man. And blindness was pretty common back in the days. I mean, it was terrible. It was very sad because there's no braille, there's no guide dogs, there's no school for the blind, there's no government programs or anything.
It was a pretty hopeless life. All he could do is beg. So Jesus stops, and he looks at this man with a loving heart. But the disciples, they want to engage in this kind of spiritual discussion.
[2:19] Why is this man bored blind? Is it whose sin is it? Is it him or is it his parents? And you feel bad for the guy. He's probably listening to all this going, look, I'm begging here. What's going on? This is terrible.

I'm right here. Jesus says, neither, neither. It's not because he's sinned, and it's not because his parents sinned. The disciples had this idea in their head that there was this immediate and very tight relationship between sin and suffering.
Like you cheat on your tax return, and you'll get kidney stones or something like that immediately afterwards, like instant karma. Jesus says, no, it's not really how it works. Now we do, of course, have to sort of nuance this a bit.
There is suffering in the world because sin has entered the world. That is true. But individual, personal suffering is not always because of personal sin.
Sometimes it is, and it's easy to think of examples. But it's not a linear relationship. The disciples think, you know, he's having a hard life. He must have done something to deserve this.
[3:21] And of course, there's immediate problems. It's not hard to think about this. You know, like, first problem is, of course, when you think like that, it creates a tremendous amount of pride if your life is going quite well, of course.

And secondly, what the disciples think is just, it's not always true, is it? I mean, terrible people can sometimes live long and happy lives. So Jesus rejects this quite simplistic view.

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And still looking at this man, he says, look, this man is blind, so God can be glorified. God has a plan for him. And we're going to see what that plan is.
And the amazing thing here is that being healed from his blindness isn't going to be the best thing that happens to that man today. Okay, story continues.
Christ heals the man, and he uses mud. He mixes it with saliva, which is a strange detail. What's that about? Do you remember a few weeks ago, Jesus told a man to take up his bed and walk? [4:23] Jesus did that on purpose, because according to Sabbath laws, you weren't allowed to carry beds on the Sabbath. So Jesus tells him to take up his bed and walk, to purposely provoke the Pharisees into a discussion.

It's the same thing here. Apparently, he couldn't knead mud or clay on the Sabbath, because it was a bit like brick making. Anyway, so in the story, huge drama, huge drama.
And as a result in the story, people go off in these two different directions spiritually. And I'll remind you of them again. It plays out like this. The blind man becomes clearer and clearer on who Jesus is.
Stronger and stronger in his courage, defending Jesus, to the point where he actually becomes a danger to the religious elite. The Pharisees act like blind men and become more and more entrenched in what they think about this situation.
Despite the evidence, the whole thing is a great picture of what Jesus said when he said, I'm the light of the world. The light brings life to some people, but other people, they retreat from it.
[5:45] Okay, back to the story. Right then. That was scene one. Scene one. Now, I've seen two. Very, very quickly, scene two. Scene two is what happens immediately after the healing, verses eight to 12.

The man's with his neighbors. They can't wrap their head around it. Some of them don't believe it's really him. And the blind man says very clearly, look, a man called Jesus healed me. So this is where we're at right now.
Jesus is a man, and he healed me. That's all he's got so far. Now, scene three, verses 13 to 17. The neighbors bring this formerly blind man to the Pharisees because they're like, well, the Pharisees need to see this.
So the rulers interrogate him. And again, he just sees what happens. He goes, he put mud in my eyes, I washed, and I see. Now, there's some disagreement with the religious leaders.
Remember, some of them go, look, a man of God wouldn't do this on the Sabbath. It's illegal. You're not allowed to do that. And others are going like, well, something happened. Something pretty amazing happened. Maybe there's more to this.
[6:49] They turned to the formerly blind man and say, who do you think Jesus is? And he says, a prophet. So there's movement here. Movement in his understanding of who Jesus is.

And you see there's this, like, bifurcation right between the two. They're starting to go off in these directions. The Pharisees at this point, still a bit divided as to what this is about. But the former blind man, he's progressed in his understanding of Jesus.
He's not just a man. He's a prophet. Let's keep going. Let's go to scene four now. Scene four is verses 18 to 22. The Pharisees, they simply can't. They're really struggling here.
So they look for a loophole. Perhaps this is a case of fraud. I knew a woman, a friend of mine back in New Zealand, who faked cancer for attention and money.
And they're thinking, maybe it's something like this, but kind of the reverse of this. They're faking it for attention. So they call on the parents. Is this your son?
[7:51] Is this your son? Yes. Was he actually born blind? Yes. How do you explain this? Just, you know, leave us out of it, is basically their response.

Why is that? Why is that? Well, they don't want to be kicked out of the synagogue, which is what would happen if they sort of even gave a hint that they were into Jesus.
And getting kicked out of the synagogue, that's a big deal. It's not like they can just roll up to some other church on Sunday. Right? This was the center of life. If they were excommunicated, they would forever be way out on the margins.
Okay, moving on. So the Pharisees are faced with overwhelming evidence that the beggar was blind, and now he sees. It's definitely him. The parents have confirmed it.
It's very inconvenient, though. So what do they do? They soften their hearts. They're a bit more open to Jesus. No, they dig in their heels. They just don't want to make, take the claims of Jesus

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seriously, because there's something in their hearts.
[8:59] There's something wrong in their hearts. So they haul this formerly blind man back in, and they go, okay, let's go over this one more time. Scene five.

Scene five. It's a great scene. Scene five. So they say to the man, they go, look, we know Jesus is a sinner. So you can see their opinion of Jesus now just keeps going down, right?
He's a sinner. And the guy says, look, I don't know if he's a sinner, but he healed me. I really like this guy. Don't you love this guy? I really like him.
Because what does he do? What does he do? What does he do? He just keeps telling the truth about what Jesus has done for him. The Pharisees are like, well, how did he heal you?
He goes, I've already told you this. You seem very interested. Do you want to become a disciple? This is too much. This is too much for the Pharisees.
[9:55] And they start huffing. This is verse 28. They start huffing and puffing about their heritage. And the blind man, he's just astonished. He can't work out why they're so defiant.

And in verse 31, he goes, this is amazing to me. He healed me. This is obviously a God thing. And they just totally pushed over the edge. They can't defend their position, though.
So what do they do? They just insult him. Verse 34, they answered him, you were born in utter sin and you would teach us. And then they cast him out. Now, if you know anything about rhetoric, you know that this is called an ad hominem strategy.
Do you know this phrase? Ad hominem strategy. It's a Latin phrase. It means if you can't argue your case on the facts, you just attack the person. This is what they do.
The upshot is, the beggar is excommunicated. So where are we at at this point? The formerly blind man is getting braver and braver.
[10:59] And the Pharisees are reduced to just name calling. Okay, our final scene, scene six, scene six. This is verse 35 to the end. Jesus hears what's happened to the beggar, this formerly blind man, and he tracks him down, which is very lovely.

And Jesus, who has opened his eyes physically, now opens his heart spiritually. And he simply asks him to believe.
And he does. And the man worships him and calls him Lord, which is wonderful. And then Jesus summarizes everything that's happened. Verse 39. For judgment I came into the world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see, who think they see, may become blind.
Okay, what does that all mean? Those who do not see may see. That's the story of the blind man. Those who see may become blind.
That's the story of the Pharisees. Okay, that's the passage. That's it. Now let's take a step back and look at the main ideas here.
[12:09] So what was the big message? What's the big idea captured in this miracle and captured in these vastly two different responses?

And it's very simple. The main point is this. We are blind until Jesus opens our eyes. We are blind until our eyes are opened by Jesus.
And we see this in the trajectories of the two main human players. The blind man and the Pharisees. The man born blind. He wasn't seeking Jesus.
Jesus sought him out. Healed him. Opened his eyes physically. Opened his eyes spiritually. And this man grows. And he grows. And he grows through a number of ways.
He grows in his courage. And I'll say it again. I love this guy. He just keeps telling the truth about what Jesus did for him. And he grows in his spiritual clarity. He moves from calling Jesus a man to a prophet to the Lord.
[13:12] Now, the Pharisees. What about them? It's really important to know that they are not in the story for us to hate.

This is not a story of goodies and baddies. We're not supposed to boo when they come on the stage like this is some kind of pantomime. They're there to help us see the truth that we are blind until Jesus opens our eyes spiritually.
Remember, in the story, the blind man, he's not arguing with crazy people, right? He's up against the religious elite. These are smart, respectable people who do religious stuff all day, who have religious conversations all day, who knew their Bible really well.
They are the people who should have known from the Bible that giving sight to the blind was the kind of thing a coming Messiah would do. If anyone should have understood who Jesus was, it

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should have been them.
But they didn't see it. And their refusal was illogical because the evidence was so there. They acted like blind men. And they were oblivious to their blindness.
[14:28] They thought they saw clearly. Again, they're not the baddies. We're not supposed to go, oh, the Pharisees, you're so dumb. You're so dumb.

I'm glad I'm not like you. Even, the point is, even, this is the point, it's like a contrast point. Even the folks in the best position to recognize Jesus didn't.
That's how blind we are. That's how blind we are before Christ. We are the Pharisees.
Like all of us, we are Pharisees. We are blind until our eyes are opened. Okay, what do we take away from all this? Firstly, great thankfulness.
We're blind from birth until Jesus opens our eyes. So we can never be arrogant about our faith. We can never be prideful about having faith. We can't ever sit here and think to ourselves, oh, the unspiritual.
[15:28] Oh, the obvious. We go driving home, we'll see people jogging and playing with the kids. Oh, these people, they really should be in church. Why? I'm so great. I'm so, you know. Folks, Jesus, you're here because Jesus opened your eyes.

You're not here. You're not here because you're clever. Jesus saw you and he loved you and he saved you. And if Jesus would do that for you, could you not trust him with your whole life, with everything else in your life?
Could you not trust him for your children and for your career and your health challenges? Secondly, as well as thankfulness, I think it's helpful to know from the story that when Jesus opens your eyes, there can be repercussions to that.
I think it's one of the other big ideas here. It can be really confusing for people when you come to faith, just being a Christian in general. There may be hostility. Remember the story, right?
The blind man, the greater his clarity, the greater the hostility, his conversion, his conversion, caused problems for him.
[16:40] He was excommunicated. It caused problems for his parents. You know, so don't be surprised if you're vocal and public about your faith.

Don't be surprised about hostility, even from people you really love. I remember sitting my mother down and telling her at 17 years old that I'd become a Christian and she swore at me.
We see in the passage, this man, he paid a great cost getting kicked out of the synagogue and that cost was welded to the fact he just kept telling the truth.
I was blind and now I see and this man Jesus did it and he wouldn't budge on it. The Pharisees wanted him to lie, at least deny what had happened and his life, you know, at that point would have been easier but he wouldn't and why wouldn't he lie?
Because the beggar thought Jesus was more beautiful and more wonderful than his own safety and his own security and his own reputation and his own comfort and because of that he was free to speak the truth.
[17:52] This is one of the reasons I love this story so much. This man, blind from birth, he's such an unlikely inspiration, an example for us, an inspiration to be truth tellers.

Folks, be captured by Jesus like this man was. Go and tell people what Jesus has done for you. Amen. Amen.

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