

2017 True Blindness James Shepherd

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 January 2017

Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0 : 0 0] In 2015, a photo went up online that divided the whole globe. Every single person was divided around this photo. It was titled, The Dress.

You may remember this photo circulating social media and news outlets. It got so much attention from everyone because no one was sure what color it was. Some said it was a blue dress with black lining, but there were others who were adamant that it was a white dress with gold lining.

Now you may have been one of those people who put your argument out there and weighed in on the whole debate saying it's this or it's this. So many people were convinced it was a blue and black dress and argued fiercely for it.

So many people thought it was a white and gold dress and argued fiercely for it. It lasted weeks and people were trying to work out why people thought one way or the other. Now just to confirm, it was confirmed later on that the dress was a blue and black dress, but so many people were convinced otherwise.

So many people were adamant they were seeing a gold and white dress and their eyes were deceived. Having sight is a wonderful gift.

[1 : 1 2] Being able to observe the beautiful world around us, being able to see the faces of loved ones, being able to see danger and avoid it, it's truly a wonderful gift that we have.

But it's obvious from this small example, from the dress, that whilst we all have sight, sometimes we don't see clearly. Our world today is so adamant that it sees clearly.

We believe science has helped us progress and advance to the point where we can see with precision, meaning that we can determine exactly how the world functions and how we should live in it today. We therefore believe that we are more enlightened than our predecessors are.

We see clearer now the way things are than any other generation before us. But whilst the world claims to see things clearer than ever before, it has become more and more blind to the truth about God, about their Creator.

Our world has become blind to its created purpose in serving and worshipping the Creator. The world is adamant that it sees clearly. But it's been deceived to think that it can see clearly without God, that it can see clearly on its own, without the light of the world.

[2 : 2 9] Our sight has been corrupted because of sin. Rather than seeing things as they truly are, we see things as we want them to be seen. We believe ourselves to be objective and unbiased, but the reality is sin has put a veil over our eyes to make us think we don't need God in this world to exist.

Or we come up with our own version of God that suits us, that suits the way we see things in the world. All unaware of how blind we actually have become, robbed of our true purpose in worshipping the one and true God.

So what hope is there for our world today to see clearly? What hope is there for us that we might see clearly? The healing of the blind man here in John 9 is the second sign in John's Gospel, showing who Jesus is and what he has come to do.

So specifically here, he is the light of the world who has come to open the eyes of the blind, that all who see might, as this formerly blind man does, says in verse 38, believe in him.

But this passage also serves as a warning, an indictment on those who would, when they are confronted with the light of the world, reject him and turn away from him. And the question we are left with is, which one are we?

[3 : 53] Are we more like the blind beggar who knows he is blind and needs his sight restored, or are we more like the Pharisees who in their arrogance believe they see things clearly, believe they see the world clearly, but in fact are actually completely blind to the reality?

As we look at this passage, let that question just sink in the back of your mind as we reflect on the miracle as both a sign of what Jesus has come to do and who he is, and a warning to all who reject him as the light of the world.

So firstly, this miracle is a sign. We're introduced to the blind man at the very beginning of this passage. And whilst it is clear that this man was not born blind because of his own sin or because of his parents' sin, it should be understood that he is blind still because of sin's impact on the world and on his life.

He is still born under the power and the reign of sin as we all are born under the reign and power of sin. You see, God made human beings with eyes that should work.

He didn't make us to be blind, but to be able to see. And so we should understand that God didn't make him to be blind, but Jesus says in response, this happens so the works of God might be displayed in him.

[5 : 10] It's in light of the fact that while sin still affects our world and still corrupts our world, sin is not outside of God's control. that God is not powerless in the face of sin.

Indeed, he will go on to show his power by reversing the effects of sin and in this specific case, by reversing this man's blindness and giving him sight. For as Jesus says of himself in verse 5, I am the light of the world.

Jesus then makes mud, puts on the beggar's eyes and tells him to wash it off. When the beggar does this, he comes back seen. What takes place before us is truly an incredible miracle.

Indeed, it's truly the work of God. It's not the work of a magician or a witch, nor is it a trick. Jesus here is doing the work of God, which is to overturn the power of sin and death and usher in the kingdom of life and life, the kingdom of God.

This man has spent all his life living under the power of sin and he has felt it quite acutely. Now, as I said, we all lived under the power of sin, but this man was born blind.

[6 : 24] He has felt it very sharply all his life. He directly experienced the corrupt work of sin on his own body, but also that sin robbed him of the ability to worship.

He was a blind beggar. All he had to do and look forward to in life was to wake up, sit on the side of the road and beg for his living. Beg that people would give him food and money so he could get what he needed to live.

As we saw in verse 2 as well, most Jews thought that if you were born blind, you must have sinned or your parents must have sinned. Therefore, he wasn't welcome into the temple to worship God.

This man's state of affairs in being born blind meant that he was robbed of the opportunity to worship, to be part of God's people. And so what Jesus does in restoring his sight is overturn the effects of sin in his life.

Literally, open his eyes to see the God of heaven and earth who calls him to worship. Jesus frees him and gives him rest from his suffering.

[7 : 36] This miracle is a beautiful sign because it points towards a time when this work of God will be fulfilled on a much greater scale. On a small scale here, Jesus overturns the power of sin for this blind man by giving him his sight back.

But this sign anticipates a time when Jesus will overturn the power of sin and death for all people through his own death and resurrection. We look forward not only to our eyes being redeemed, but our whole bodies being redeemed as well.

When they'll be made new, no longer to suffer from pain that comes from sickness, from chronic illness, from disability, from mental illness. We'll be free from such pain because of what Jesus has done in redeeming our bodies.

But this is not merely a physical healing that we look forward to as we see in this passage. For Jesus will heal this blind man a second time of his blindness to make a point that he has not only come to redeem our bodies from the power of sin, but also to redeem our spiritual sight from the tight grasp of sin as well.

For the power of sin has robbed us, or robbed God, the worship that is due to him and robbed us the ability to do what we were created to do and to worship him.

[8 : 59] Blinding us to serve and worship created things instead rather than the creator himself. And so Jesus will not settle for simply opening our physical eyes.

He will also open our spiritual eyes as he does here for this blind man. And so in verse 35 he says to him, Do you believe in the Son of Man?

Who is he, sir, that I might believe in him? And Jesus said, 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. The work of God would not be complete in this man's life if it did not result in believing and worshipping Jesus.

The redemption of our physical bodies that we look forward to includes the full reorientation of our heart and our soul to love and to worship God for all eternity that we would clearly see untainted by the power of sin the world as God may it to be with the purpose of worshipping God as we live in it.

[10 : 06] For our bodies are not our own. We exist in a world today where people's gods are their stomachs. A world that wants to consume more and more and more whatever catches their eye.

For so many their body is theirs to do whatever they wish with. It's politically incorrect to tell someone you can't do that with your body. People will say in response I can do whatever I want with my body.

I can sleep with whoever I want. I can eat and drink whatever I want. I can do whatever I want with my body. It's my body. But as Romans 12 1 says our bodies are living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God as our act of worship.

They are redeemed by God to serve and to worship him. Jesus has come not merely to redeem our bodies and make everything pain free for us.

Indeed the whole point of this miracle is so much more than that. he has come to restore the whole person both his physical body and his spiritual sight in order that we might use our bodies well to worship him.

[11 : 26] That is all about him worshipping him. This world this life exists for his glory and as we align with that purpose as we see clearly that purpose we can do that for our joy as well then as we live in this world that is his.

This is what Jesus has come to do. This is the beauty of the sign that we see here in John 9. And so we who are aware that like the blind man we need our own sight restored we can have hope that we will see things clearly and worship.

But as mentioned earlier this miracle also serves as a warning an indictment upon those who would choose to turn away from the light. And so secondly we are going to look at this miracle as a warning.

So just after the blind man has received sight people start seeing him right walking the streets this man who was once blind who was once sitting by the road all the days of his life is now walking around looking at things amazed by what he sees and people are going is this the same person?

What is going on here? They ask him what happened? He says this guy called Jesus he washed my eyes and now I can see. And they're still utterly confused by what's going on perplexed so they bring him to the Pharisees the people who know are in the know what's going on in these kinds of situations.

[12 : 51] Now have you ever been in a conversation with someone where the conversation just seems to be going nowhere? You're trying to get a point across you're trying to explain something to them you're trying to help understand something but it's just not getting through and you think this is just going absolutely nowhere.

I used to work for an office store about a few years ago I used to manage a store in the Hills District and I remember a customer coming in one time and he came up to our little kiosk and I was there and he said to me now I'm looking for an iTablet and that moment I'm thinking I have no idea what an iTablet is but before I could ask him to clarify do you mean iPad?

Do you mean a Samsung Galaxy tablet? Do you mean this or that? He says now don't tell me it doesn't exist I know it exists now Apple didn't make it and it's not an iPad I want an iTablet and you're going to give it to me and from there we had this conversation where I was trying to convince him perhaps he may have made a mistake perhaps there's no such thing as an iTablet and you actually are thinking of an iPad and back and forth we went he kept telling me no you're wrong I'm right I know there's such thing as an iTablet and I want it and I'm sitting there on my computer googling iTablet trying to show him look iTablet there and everything else that kept coming out was just iPad iPad iPad iPad so I'm thinking come on man surely you see that you're wrong here but he was adamant he was adamant that it existed he went away upset at me and I went away just confused it just went nowhere and I feel like that's what's going on here with the Pharisees this conversation this dialogue they have with the blind man the formerly blind man just goes nowhere doesn't seem to be going anywhere and it leaves us perplexed as well as the formerly blind man and confused and we kind of laugh and think it's a bit silly but it's also quite telling as to the power of sin how it's so tight around our sight in verse 15 it says the Pharisees asked again me and they've already heard once what has happened they don't want to hear it again from the blind man he answers them by saying he put mud on my eyes the man replied and I washed and now I see explanations don't get much clearer than that simpler than that and so anyone there would be like yep that's what happened yep you were once blind I know that

I saw you begging and now you can see that's quite obvious you're looking at us you're walking around you know what's going on but instead of being amazed at what took place they began to judge what Jesus did and how he did it and why he did it and they questioned him in a number of ways the validity of what happened they were firstly concerned by the fact that he performed a miracle on the Sabbath day a day in which you should not perform any work and so they said well this man can't be from God he does not keep the Sabbath then they began to doubt the credibility of the man's story of being born blind so they brought in his parents and they asked them was this your son was he born blind and they said yes of course he is don't ask us ask him then they even tried to manipulate him put words in his mouth by saying give glory to God we know this man's a sinner it's almost as if they're trying to coerce him to say what they want him to say and we sit here and go don't you get it can't you see how amazing this is he was blind born blind and now he sees how do you not see they fail to perceive what has happened here because they refuse to look closely they refuse to look because they believe they already see things clearly for them

Jesus is just an anomaly something that doesn't fit into their perception and view of things it's far too confronting for them to even consider what it all might mean it's far easier for them to pick up and judge anything that is inconsistent to the way they see things are they believe they see clearly but in reality they are the ones who just want to see what they want to see and they refuse to look at what's truly obviously in front of them the formerly blind man is perplexed as well he can't believe they don't understand and when the Pharisees tell him it's because that we don't know who this man is and where he comes from he replies with this amazing response he says 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 or opened the eyes of a man born blind if this man were not from God he could do nothing these are things the Pharisees should have known obvious to a man born blind who has never read any scripture in his life who has never been in the temple and yet it's obvious to him what has happened to you and who this man might possibly be the man who was born blind shows that he's got a clearer and sharper vision than the Pharisees who should be able to see clearly the Pharisees response to this statement characterizes the depth of how tight sin's grip can be on our sight as they say to him you were steeped in sin at birth how dare you lecture us and they threw him out at the heart of the issue is their pride their unwillingness to let go and to simply admit no we don't see properly we don't understand what's going on maybe we should look into this when it's plainly explained to them not only what happened but what it all might mean they refuse to look closely sin is so planted itself deep in the heart of the Pharisees that they are convinced they see things clearly they are convinced they know what's going on when in fact they don't you can have all the knowledge in the world you can be known as the wisest the smartest person you can be seen as someone who sees things clearly who's self-aware and yet you still could be blind as there are many many people today who are smart who are self-aware who we give awards to for being smart and yet they are blind spiritually blind to what is the real purpose of this world blind to their God and their creator the Pharisees were the people who were supposed to see clearly but they didn't they were blind the irony as well is that they would have this formerly blind man give glory to God by declaring Jesus who is God a sinner that just shows the depth of their blindness and how tight sin's grip is over them all because of their pride all because they refuse to look closely at what has happened here believing that the way they see things is enough there are those who ridicule Christianity and the Bible believing they see things clearer than those who would devote themselves to the teachings that are so archaic and so backwards all the while not realising the power of sin has over them and how it's corrupted and distorted their vision if only people would just look closer and not be so narrow at the one who is the light of the world maybe they would understand

[20 : 37] to realise that as human beings deeply affected by sin there is no hope in ourselves to overturn those effects there's no hope in ourselves to overturn the power of sin only in Jesus who is the light of the world who can bring sight to the blind is there hope for us to see clearly for those who remain blind who in their stubborn arrogance choose to not look closely this miracle this wonderful miracle we have before us that would encourage us that gives us hope for us who see ends up being a warning an indictment and a judgement upon those who refuse to see as Jesus says in verse 39 for judgement I have come into this world so the blind will see and those who see will become blind it's a scary thought we must constantly check ourselves as to who we are more like the blind beggar who knows and acknowledges that he does not see clearly he needs Jesus to see clearly or like the Pharisees who believe in their arrogance in their pride that they see clearly that their own sight is sufficient the Pharisees are those who have cemented themselves in judgement they have been handed over as Romans 1 might put it to their own vision and to their own sights which ironically blinds them to the truth the truth that Jesus is the one who has come to restore our sights who has come to reorient our hearts and our minds to worship and to love him each and every day we must humbly confess before God and ask him to continue to restore our sight that we might continue to worship him

Steve mentioned before about New Year's Resolution goals about growing in our treasuring Jesus diverting ourselves to time in the word in the Psalms surely that is the goal of our life to worship it's a good goal to make for your New Year's Resolution year after year after year indeed worship is the goal worship is the goal as we see here in John 9 in verse 5 Jesus says again he says I've come this man was born blind in order that God's work might be fulfilled in him and it's not until we get to verse 38 that we see the work fulfilled where he responds in belief and in worship the way in which we can know who we are is to look at who we worship and what we worship things are not black and white in this world things in Christianity are not black and white in this world but something that all believers all we can all know is that we are designed and our purpose in life when we see clearly is to worship

God and to worship him alone so will you continue to come humbly acknowledging that we only see clearly when we allow Jesus to restore our eyes that we can only worship our wonderful and powerful God when he gives our sight to see him clearly will you continue to come to him to worship come to him to have your eyes restored day in day out that we might not become tainted by sin and let sins affect us to see things in a distorted way let's pray heavenly father we thank you so much that you're a God who is gracious and who is merciful that although we were blind because of sin we lived a way that did not honour and glorify you did not live a way that was in line of our purpose we used our bodies for sin we thank you father that through your son and through your mercy you gave us eyes that could see by your spirit see the problem of this world see the problem of sin and the hope that comes from knowing you and what you've done for us we pray Lord that throughout our week and throughout our lives we'll continue to always see you clearly because of your spirit and because of your word we pray Lord we would be immersing ourselves in it day by day trusting in its sufficiency to guide us through our life that we might continue to worship you all our days we pray this in your son's name

Amen