

Sight Giver

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, church. Glad to have you here on the live stream. It's good to see you all and be seen by you all this morning. Our sermon text today is John chapter 9.
- John chapter 9. Go ahead and turn there if you have a Bible with you. I'm going to pray for us, and then I'll read John chapter 9.
- Let's pray together. Father, as the psalmist prayed, we pray this morning that you would open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of your word.
- By your spirit, we pray that you would allow us to see with the eyes of faith the wonder and truth of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And in seeing him, Father, may we worship him this morning.
- And in worshiping him, may we become more like him. And in becoming like him, would we know true and lasting joy. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name.
- [1 : 0 6] Amen. Amen. Well, let me read for us John chapter 9. And he, that is Jesus, passed by. He saw a man blind from birth.
- And the disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.
- We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Having said these things, Jesus spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva.
- Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which means sent. So he went and washed and came back seeing.
- The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, Is this not the man who used to sit and beg? Some said, It is he. Others said, No, but he is like him. He kept saying, I am the man.
- [2 : 2 0] So they said to him, Then how were your eyes opened? He answered, The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash.
- So I went and washed and received my sight. They said to him, Where is he? He said, I don't know. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.
- Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, He put mud on my eyes and I washed and I see.
- Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath. But others said, How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?
- And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, What do you say about him since he has opened your eyes? He said, He is a prophet.
- [3 : 2 1] The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked him, Is this your son who you say was born blind?

How then does he now see? His parents answered, We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees, we do not know. Nor do we know who opened his eyes.

Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself. His parents said these things because they feared the Jews. For the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

Therefore, his parents said, He is of age. Ask him. So for the second time, they called the man who had been blind and said to him, Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.

He answered, Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. Now, one thing I do know, though I was blind, now I see. They said to him, What did he do to you?

[4 : 26] How did he open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?

And they reviled him, saying, You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from. The man answered, Why, this is an amazing thing.

You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. They answered him, You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?

And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man?

[5 : 29] He answered, And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him? Jesus said to him, You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you. He said, Lord, I believe.

And he worshipped him. Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, Are we also blind? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt.

But now that you say we see, your guilt remains. So, there you are, sleeping in comfortably on a Saturday morning, when suddenly, mom or dad, or your spouse, or your roommate, walks into the room, pulls back your Ikea room darkening curtains, and says with a smile, Time to get up!

And the light that comes flooding through the window into your comfortable, sleepy Saturday morning is so bright, so sudden, so overwhelming, that for a moment, you can't see a thing.

[6 : 48] You are, as they say, blinded by the light. Jesus, again, in our passage, calls himself, in verse 5, the light of the world.

And as we see, as this passage unfolds, that this light that Jesus is has a two-fold effect. On the one hand, Jesus causes the blind to see. But on the other hand, like the curtains being torn open on your lazy Saturday, Jesus also causes the seeing to become blind.

And at the heart of the passage is this question. Coming face-to-face with Jesus, will we humbly admit our spiritual blindness and receive sight?

Or will we proudly say that we see just fine without Him and so remain blind? So this is our outline.

This is our sermon today. Jesus makes the blind to see, and He makes the seeing blind. So let's look at the first part of that then. Jesus being the light of the world, because He's the light of the world, the blind are made to see.

[7 : 58] Now in the first seven verses of the chapter, John recounts Jesus' healing of this man born blind. But notice how the disciples, notice how the disciples want to explain the man's disability.

How do they do that? Well, they say there must be, there must be some particular sin that caused this. Either this man himself sinned in the womb, which some Jews at the time believed could be possible, or maybe they think his parents sinned in some way, and that's why he's blind.

But notice that Jesus rejects this line of thinking. Now of course, sickness and disability and death were not how God created the world to be. all of those things flooded into God's good creation because of the fall.

So in a very general sense, we can say that sickness and disability and death and brokenness and decay, all of those things in the world are a result of sin in general, capital S sin, the fall.

But to point to a particular individual instance of sin as a cause of a particular individual instance of suffering, Jesus says, no, that's not how this works.

[9 : 11] Notice what he says. He says, it was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. In other words, this man's blindness was not a sign that he was a greater sinner than other people.

No, in fact, this man's blindness was going to be the very place where God's glory shone through his life. Now, pause there for a moment with me.

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? Our places of greatest weakness and vulnerability, that's where God's glory just might shine through our lives the brightest.

I wonder, where do you feel weak or vulnerable or low this morning? Maybe like the man in this passage, it's a physical limitation or disability, or perhaps it's an emotional weakness or vulnerability.

Maybe it's something in your history or in your family. Rather than ignoring or denying that reality in your life, rather than being constantly afflicted with the shame because of it, Jesus says, that's where my glory will shine through.

[10 : 39] Right there. Right where you know, right in that place where you admit that you don't have it all together, right there in your weakness. That's where my beauty will shine forth.

But at first, it gets a little messy, doesn't it? Jesus heals this man in a very curious way.

Now, think about it. Jesus, and we've seen this in the gospel so far, Jesus could have just spoken a word and this man could have seen. But instead, what does Jesus do? He spits on the ground, he makes some mud, and then he smears it in the man's closed eyes.

What is going on here? Now, some have thought perhaps that Jesus is intentionally provoking another Sabbath controversy with the Pharisees.

As we find out in a few verses, all of this is happening on the Sabbath day. And again, according to Jewish tradition, things like kneading or anointing or healing, these things, they weren't allowed on the Sabbath according to the passed down sort of religious traditions.

[11 : 46] So perhaps Jesus wants to force the issue of his identity yet again with the religious authorities by healing this man in this sort of strange way. Or maybe the reason Jesus heals this way, some have thought, is because he's actually hearkening back to the Genesis account.

Do you remember? God created humanity from what? From the dust of the ground in Genesis 2. So perhaps here, Jesus is sort of reenacting this creation story as if to say that he is the creator come to restore and recreate his fallen world.

He created humanity out of the dirt of the ground and now he's going to recreate us out of the dirt of the ground. It's hard to know exactly what Jesus had in mind, but I think two things here are pretty certain.

What Jesus does here first is very personal and it's, as we said, a little messy. In order for Jesus to bring this man from blindness to sight, in order for this man's place of greatest weakness to be the place where God's glory flood through his life, the man has to be open to the uncomfortable touch of his master's hand.

The man has to be willing to humble himself. And what we find is he is. Mud in his eyes, he goes to the pool and he washes and he comes back seeing.

[13 : 16] And the question put before us, friends, is the same thing. Are we willing to humble ourselves before Jesus even if it means getting a little messy in the process?

Even if the way in which Jesus wants to do his unique work in our life isn't what we expected and isn't quite what we might explain. Now, as we consider what that might mean for us to bring even our deepest weakness and vulnerability to Jesus, to see that those are the places where his glory might shine through the brightest, notice two things about this passage.

Notice two applications here, as it were, of our first big point. First, notice, notice the compassionate urgency of Jesus here. Look again at verses four and five.

Jesus says, we must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work as long as I am in the, as long as I am in the world, in the world, I am the light of the world.

Now, I want us to see the heart of the Savior in these words. He sees us not just in our physical blindness, but in our spiritual blindness.

[14 : 33] He sees us in our desperate need. And what does Jesus do? Does he hesitate? Now, think about it.

It would have been very natural for Jesus to hesitate here in chapter nine. After all, it is Sabbath day. And in John chapter seven and eight, right before this scene, Jesus has just gone another ten rounds with the religious authorities.

And they literally want to kill him. And here he is, still in Jerusalem after the Feast of Booths, having just gone toe-to-toe with the religious authorities yet again.

And now, the disciples, you can almost feel them looking at Jesus and saying, really, Jesus, are you going to do this on the Sabbath again? Can we just let the dust settle down a little bit?

Can we let things cool off? And come back, like, tomorrow and heal this guy? But no. Our Savior knows that his mission must, he says, be performed.

[15 : 35] His earthly ministry was just a few short years. Soon, Jesus would face betrayal, arrest, and execution. The night was coming, he says.

Now, yes, after that night would come the new day of his resurrection, his ascension on high, his outpouring of the Spirit, yes, his mission would advance through the Spirit-filled church, and we would do even greater works than these, but even so, we have to keep in mind, brothers and sisters, that the night is coming when no one can work.

This age is not going to last forever. God will come to judge his world in perfect justice, and the time for turning will be no more.

And so, Jesus, knowing that the time is short, acts with compassionate urgency. And consider what that cost him.

Another miracle of mercy on the Sabbath day. Another bold assertion of his sovereign authority. Another burst of light into the darkness of a world that does not comprehend it.

[16 : 42] Jesus knows that doing works like this will lead him straight to the cross. And does he hesitate? Does he let the dust settle?

No. He spits in the dust, picks it up, and rubs it right in the guy's eyes. He opens his eyes and the blind see.

You see, friends, what will eventually happen in the Gospel of John is that Jesus will let the darkness of the world fall on himself. The darkness of human hatred and evil, the darkness even of divine wrath for our sin.

He will let the darkness fall on himself so that we can step into the light. So that we, the blind from birth, can at last see. Do you see now that you can trust this Savior?

trust him, trust him even with your weakness, even with your vulnerability. Do you see that you can humble yourself before him and find yourself humbled before a loving, strong, and gentle Savior?

[17 : 53] you can admit your need and you can admit your blindness and you can let him spread some proverbial mud on your eyes and you can hear him say, wash, and then you can come back seeing.

Friends, this is Jesus, full of compassion, full of urgency to save the lost, to save us, to save you. But notice second here, as Jesus opens the eyes of the blind, notice, notice the wonderful boldness of this man who is so humble.

In verses 8 through 33, the sort of long middle section of chapter 9, notice all that this healed man has to face from those around him. Notice first, notice first his boldness or his assurance through it all.

First, as he faces the confusion of his neighbors. Wait, they say, you can't really be the same person. Now, you know, people might say the same of you after you become a Christian or after the Lord does a deep, humbling, healing, changing work in your life.

People will expect you to be the same old person you always were with the same old habits and the same old tendencies. But the reality is, is humbling yourself before Jesus means that you will change and that will cause confusion to the people around you.

[19 : 19] And yet, notice how the man responds. He says, no, it's really me. Jesus did this. Second, the man overcomes not just the confusion of the neighbors but the suspicion of the religious authorities.

Now, quite naturally, the neighbors take the healed man to the local synagogue leaders. That was a pretty common thing to do. This seems like a big deal, they think. This guy just got healed. Let's take him to the people we trust and know and let's let them sort this out.

This is kind of a big deal. Let's go. But, all that many of them are concerned about is whether or not the traditions have been kept.

And in keeping the traditions, they're worried about keeping their own power in place. But again, the healed man has this deep assurance and deep boldness that their suspicions of him and of Jesus can't shake.

He says, Jesus must be a prophet. He must be someone sent from God. And you can see as this passage is unfolding that the healed man's faith is deepening as he undergoes testing.

[20 : 25] It was Jesus, he says. Who is Jesus? He must be a prophet. He must be someone sent from God. Third, the man overcomes not just the confusion of his neighbors, not just the suspicion of the authorities in his life, but he overcomes even the fear of his parents.

That is, this man doesn't succumb to the same fear as his parents do. And what is that fear? It's a fear of being cast out or being excluded or being excommunicated from the synagogue.

The synagogue was sort of the local place of worship for Jews in the town. And why were they afraid of being excluded or cast out or excommunicated from the synagogue? Well, because some synagogues had already started casting people out if they confessed that Jesus is the Messiah.

Now, we know that this wasn't a widespread policy during Jesus' lifetime. It wasn't the fact that every synagogue had sort of instituted this rule, but it does seem like some local congregations in Jesus' day had started to take a definitive stand on this man from Nazareth.

Rumors were spreading about him. People were getting enthusiastic. Some local synagogues had to draw a line and they declared that he is not from God and anyone who thought otherwise would be cast out, excommunicated from fellowship in the synagogue.

[21 : 46] Now, that's no small thing. Imagine being cut off from the sort of locus of your community, your family, and your sense of belonging to God and God's people.

Not being allowed to come and participate in the teaching and the rituals and the practices and the songs that really make you who you are as a Jewish person in the first century. It's hard for us to find a good analogy for that today, you know.

If you can't come to church on Sunday, your whole world doesn't fall apart, right? I think it would be sort of like losing our job today as I thought about it. Just think of how much identity and belonging, not to mention financial provision, we get from our jobs.

Now, if confessing Jesus as the Messiah meant an immediate loss of your job, you'd be afraid, right? Well, if you can feel a little bit of that fear, then you can sympathize a little with this guy's parents.

They're faced with a really hard decision. And so what do they do? In fear, they dodge the question. Ask him.

[23 : 00] He's of age. We don't know what happened. And so they bring the healed man back in. And does he cave to the fear? No. Something so profound has happened to this man that even the fear of being thrown out of the synagogue doesn't shake him.

You have to love the moment when they start interrogating him again. And he says in verse 27, I've told you already how he healed me and he would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again?

Do you want to become his disciples? I think that's the definition of pluck, right? Like having that kind of audacity and boldness in the face of what really is a sort of devolving situation.

What would give this guy such courage? What would give him such assurance? Well, it was his life-changing encounter with Jesus. Verse 25, One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.

All the confusion, all the suspicion, all the fear can't shake that one thing. Though I was blind, now I see. J.C. Ryle, an old pastor from the 19th century, writes this in his reflection on this passage.

[24 : 27] He says, There's no kind of evidence so satisfactory as this to the heart of a real Christian. His knowledge may be small, his faith may be feeble, his doctrinal views may be confused and indistinct at present, but Christ has really wrought a work of grace in his heart by the Spirit.

He feels within him something that you cannot overthrow. I was dark and now I have light. I was afraid of God and now I love him. I was fond of sin and now I hate it.

I was blind and now I see. And then Ryle goes on and he says, Let us never rest till we know and feel within us some real work of the Holy Spirit.

Let us not be content with just the name and the form of Christianity. Let us desire to have true experiential acquaintance with it.

Feelings are no doubt deceitful and they're not everything in religion, but if we have no inward feelings about spiritual matters, Ryle says, it's a very bad sign. The hungry man eats and feels strengthened.

[25 : 42] The thirsty man drinks and feels refreshed. Surely the man who has within him the grace of God ought to be able to say, I feel its power. And friends, to the extent that you humble yourself before Jesus, the light of the world, bringing to him not just your strengths, but also your profound weakness, admitting to him and to others not just your abilities, but also your profound inability, to that extent, you will feel his power as you worship him, as you pray to him, as you walk with him through your life through trial and suffering.

And after the trial, do you notice what happens in verse 35? After this guy just gets put through the wringer of confusion and suspicion and fear and accusation and cast out of the synagogue himself, what happens?

Jesus comes and finds him and meets him again. Jesus seeks him out, has fellowship with him, brings him into a fuller and more robust faith. brothers and sisters, do not fear adding your voice to the voices of those who are giving testimony to the power and the goodness of Jesus.

Like this man, you don't need all the right answers. You don't need years of training. You simply need to be able to give joyful witness to the work of grace in your own life.

And the promise is that through that trial, Jesus himself will meet you. So this is the first big idea of John 9.

[27 : 30] The blind are made to see. If we admit that we're in darkness, Jesus will bring us into the light. But the second point we see here in John 9 is this, that those who think they see are blinded.

Friends, spiritual pride is a dangerous thing. And we can actually see it growing throughout this passage in the character of the Pharisees. First, they sort of dispute the healed man.

And perhaps there's some openness. You know, we see that there's some division in their ranks. And yet, they refuse to open their minds and admit that perhaps they don't have it all figured out.

Perhaps their traditions aren't the last word. Perhaps what God desires isn't a show of great power and skill and learning. Perhaps what God desires most, as the prophets will say again and again and again, is a humble and contrite heart.

A humble admission of weakness and need coming before the God of the universe. Notice how the interrogation with this healed man ends.

[28 : 38] They say, they answered him, and they say, you were born in utter sin, and would you teach us? You can just feel the vitriol coming out.

Would you teach us, they say. In other words, they refuse to be teachable. What could this uneducated, until recently disabled beggar possibly teach us, they think?

Friends, beware spiritual pride. Jesus said, for judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, are we also blind? And Jesus said, if you were blind, you'd have no guilt. In other words, if you admitted your blindness, you'd be free.

But now that you say, we see, your guilt remains. And that's where the passage ends. And that's where we end.

[30 : 02] At least our sermon. With the coming of Jesus, the curtains have been flooding open. The curtains are being ripped open, the light is pouring in, and as the church continues to proclaim the message of Jesus, the Spirit continues to shine his light into our darkness.

And the reality is, is that we'll never really see until we admit that we're blind, until we become humble and teachable. You know, there's nothing wrong with good education.

There's nothing wrong with learning and pursuing religious knowledge and pursuing these types of things. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, there's a lot of good that comes of that. And yet, if that's the thing that we're leaning on, beware, friends, that we don't become just like the Pharisees, unteachable, hardened, unable to admit our vulnerability and our weakness, unable to confess that we're not righteous, but we're sinners.

You see, friends, the cross of Jesus levels us all, does it not? Before the cross, we see that we are all sinners. That we are all woefully short of the glory of God.

Each and every one of us. And yet, what does the cross also tell us? That God loves each and every one of us. That we are all, in His eyes, precious, valued, loved.

[31 : 29] And it's right there in humility before Jesus, before the cross and the resurrection. It's right there when we really begin to see. When we take hold of Christ crucified and risen, that's when our weakness becomes our strength.

Even if God doesn't choose to heal us. That's when our foolishness of worshiping a crucified Savior becomes real wisdom. That's when our blindness becomes sight. when we take hold of Him, the light of the world.

Let's pray together. O light of the world, undimming and unsetting, O shine each mist away.

Banish the fear, the falsehood, and the fretting. Be our unchanging day. Spirit, only you can bring true humility to our hearts, so we humbly ask that you would do that work this morning.

We are so proud. We are so afraid of admitting weakness and need. Please soften our hearts. Help us to see our desperate need of grace and show us Christ.

[32 : 51] Spirit, let us see Him standing even now before our Father's throne, looking upon us in love, ready to receive us, bearing the wounds of the cross for us, casting out all fear.

Turn our hearts to you, Lord, this day, this week, and may we walk in the boldness that only humility before you can give.

Amen.