

John Series: The Glory of the One and Only
John 9: A Blind Man Sees and Seeing Men are Blind

Ryan Patty / 12.29.19

Good morning Christ Community! I pray that you had a sweet Christmas and were able to praise God for sending his Son Jesus to us. I know many of you were at the Christmas Eve service which was truly a great time and I hope you were as encouraged as we were from it. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and open them up to the book of John. We have been working our way through John for a few months now, and find ourselves on this last Sunday of 2019 in chapter nine. Now for those of you who are just joining in, let me give you the focus of the Gospel of John: Every part of the Gospel of John is seeking to show one thing, that Jesus is himself, God. That he is one with the father, truly God and truly man, who has come down to rescue us because we could not rescue ourselves. What John proclaims in this letter is that if you believe in Him, if you believe in this Jesus of Nazareth, the man who is claiming to be God and actually backing up this statement time and time again, if you have faith in THIS person, then you will have eternal life. That is the purpose of John's Gospel.

So ch. 9 brings us to a famous story, one that is getting at that main purpose of the Gospel of John, one that can be preached and emphasized many ways. A story filled with love and compassion, and even a hint of sarcasm but ultimately courageous faith. It's a story, like most other interactions of Jesus, filled with grace and judgment. This morning we will look at the story of Jesus and the man born blind. The blind beggar who was healed physically, but even greater than this he was healed spiritually. This story has much to say to us. God through his Word has much to say to us. The division of this story is straightforward. We have one overarching truth, and two responses. One truth that Jesus is communicating, and then we will see from the story the only two responses we can have to that truth.

Will you pray with me?

I am going to give you the main point and the two responses up front.

I. Jesus is the Light of the World

Response #1 - This light blinds

Response #2 - This light illuminates

Simple and straightforward. Jesus is the light of the world, and His light will blind you, or it will cause you to see. Let's read the first section (GRAB BIBLE), **John 9: 1-12 (CSB):**

As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** His disciples asked him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" **3** "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him. **4** We must do the works of him who sent me[b] while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. **5** As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 After he said these things he spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes. **7** "Go," he told him, "wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent"). So he left, washed, and came back seeing. **8** His neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit begging?" **9** Some said, "He's the one." Others were saying, "No, but he looks like him." He kept

saying, "I'm the one." **10** So they asked him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" **11** He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So when I went and washed I received my sight." **12** "Where is he?" they asked. "I don't know," he said.

I. Jesus is the Light of the World

Think with me in this scene. Jesus has just made the most controversial statement, up until this point and possibly in all of John's Gospel, to the Pharisees. Chapter 8, verse 58, "Before Abraham was, I am." He's just said that He is God, himself! They want to kill him now and they pick up stones to do so, yet his time has not yet come and he escapes and leaves the temple. And as he is leaving the temple, he sees a man. He sees a man that others would typically pass by, a man who is rarely noticed. A man that John tells us has been blind from birth. No disability check or aid like we have today. No this man couldn't work, and in that time if you couldn't work its hard for your family to pick up any slack and provide for you as well. So he has, like others during this time with varying disabilities, resulted to begging. To cry out for mercy to whoever walks by and to hope that they might be able to give something.

And his disciples are following him and say, who sinned, this man or his parents? There was a normal thought in Jewish culture that sin and suffering are closely related. That those who are blind, or lame, or suffering from some other affliction are doing so because of either their sin in the womb, or their parents sin before they were born. They simply wanted to see the connection between sin and suffering for everything, and oddly enough this thought can still be prevalent in congregations today. So let me explain quickly, a proper view of sin and suffering. The Bible is clear and provides irrefutable evidence to us the fact that there is a traceable consequence for sin. For most suffering, we can often follow a biblical logic to understand why, that is, from the effect back to the sin. But what's most troubling for us is when we can't make the connection. When we can't point to something specific. So while we can infer from Scripture that there is a **general** connection between sin and suffering, Jesus here is making sure to teach them that we don't jump to universalizing **particular** connections.

He tells them, "**Neither this man nor his parents sinned,**" Jesus answered. "**This came about so that God's works might be displayed in Him.**"

What does this tell us? It means that specific sins are not always the cause of our suffering. Genesis 3 and the entrance of sin into our world explains why people get sick or they get tumors or we die, the Fall explains the occurrence of every bit of sin and suffering in this world, but we cannot always explain why this person at this specific time has the tumor.. So I want us to be careful in having an underlying assumption that we can. You do not always get sick when you sin. (lie, cheat, steal, covet) You do not always have a bad day when you sin. You do not always get cancer because you sinned. That's the Hindu idea of Karma and it is not biblical.

And this is what Jesus is telling them. There are connections to sin and suffering in a fallen world, but it is not always a one to one correlation. So he answers, neither this man nor his parents sinned. But here's the even GREATER truth. *Rather, Jesus says, this came about so that God's works might be displayed in him.*

You see, what this tells us, is that underneath all of it, all the pain, all the suffering, the sickness, the despair, that God is still at work and that there is a PURPOSE undergirding it all. We don't serve a God who reacts to things, we serve a God who plans all things. In other words, when he ordains something to happen, he is not at the bottom of all things just reacting to human causes or wishes, but rather he's at the bottom of all things, planning all things, with a purpose behind them (Piper).

Listen to me, 2019 might have been one of your best years yet or it could have been one of your worst years yet. In a years time, Lord willing, I could say the same thing about 2020. Life in this world is full of mountain tops and valleys, but what doesn't change is that God is at work in this world, and at work in your life, and the events of your life are not for vain but have a purpose behind them. Our God plans, he does not react.

Jesus continues, "**As long as I am in the world, I am** (there's that statement again) **the light of the world.**" This is our main point of the sermon, but think with me here on the timing of this statement. It seems that the Feast of Tabernacles is either ending or has just ended. Pastor Jeff talked about this at the Christmas Eve service from ch. 8, and how there were these four 75 foot pillars with flames at the top in the court of the women that would light up the entire city. And Jesus told them in ch. 8 "I am the light of the world" and here is repeating that same thing to his disciples and to this man. Because the Jews thought they already had the light. They thought of themselves as God's people, all their religious regulations and protocols were to help them be more acceptable to God (Jeff). But none of those traditions, and definitely not their prideful position, would save them from the coming judgment. Jesus proclaims I AM the light, and it is Him you must believe in.

So then Jesus spits on some dirt, makes some mud and puts it on his eyes. Then he tells him to go wash in the pool of Siloam, and the man is healed. Notice first the simplicity of the man's response. He went, and washed, and he came back seeing. There is something there for us to learn from. But, secondly, notice what is happening in these verses. Read the text closely with me, because it sets up what is to come: In v. 3 Jesus tells us that neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this came about that **God's Works** might be displayed in him. Then in v. 4 he says that **we must do the works** of him who sent me (we being his disciples and us by extension). And then in v. 6 Jesus himself makes the mud and puts it on the man's eyes. So the question comes who is this man? He talks about the works of God being

displayed in the blind man, then he says that we must do these works, then he himself does the work of healing the blind man. So who is this man? How do we respond to him? Well this story gives us our responses, our only two responses to the light of the world.

Now let's look at the first one, follow along as I read verses 13-34 (GRAB BIBLE):

13 They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. **14** The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. **15** Then the Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," he told them. "I washed and I can see." **16** Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a sinful man perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. **17** Again they asked the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?" "He's a prophet," he said. **18** The Jews did not believe this about him—that he was blind and received sight—until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight. **19** They asked them, "Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" **20** "We know this is our son and that he was born blind," his parents answered. **21** "But we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he's of age. He will speak for himself." **22** His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him as the Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue. **23** This is why his parents said, "He's of age; ask him." **24** So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." **25** He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!" **26** Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" **27** "I already told you," he said, "and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don't want to become his disciples too, do you?" **28** They ridiculed him: "You're that man's disciple, but we're Moses's disciples. **29** We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man—we don't know where he's from." **30** "This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. **31** We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. **32** Throughout history[c] no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. **33** If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything." **34** "You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

Response #1 - This Light Blinds

What Jesus has done with this healing was both strategic and purposeful. He is going to confront the Pharisees with exactly who he is. And they are blinded in their sin to see just who that is. In verses 13-34 we have two separate interactions between the blind man and the Pharisees.

In the first one, the neighbors bring him to the Pharisees. These people were familiar with this man. They had known and seen him for years, they KNEW that he was blind. But what has happened to him is astounding to them. Verses 8 and 9 give us the interaction where some are like it's definitely him, and others are like, "nahh it just looks like him." Isn't this characteristic of people who would have been passing by people like him daily yet failing to look them in the eyes. Meanwhile he's over here saying, it's me. I was blind. He healed me. I can see you now...

So they take him to the Pharisees. Those who could deliver a verdict, because as v. 14 tells us, Jesus has done something *gravely* wrong in their eyes. He has done something on the Sabbath. And it's most likely two of the oral traditions or oral laws that he's broken. The first is

that he has kneaded something. According to the Mishnah, that is the oral tradition and interpretation of the Law, you could not do the work of kneading dough on the sabbath, and they could have seen him making mud as a form of kneading. But secondly, and the main emphasis is that a healing took place on the sabbath when a life wasn't in danger. Both of these issues center around the Sabbath. Look at how far their legalism has come in this oral tradition! A HEALING of a blind man from birth has just taken place.. And they are concerned about the day it took place on.. They were missing the bigger picture of what was happening in light of a smaller obstacle.

Illustration: This is kind of like me a few months ago... August 27th to be exact. I remember it so clearly because it was the day my daughter Leland was born. I was here at the office and was actually on the phone outside catching up with a buddy from seminary. While I am talking with him I notice this bee flying around and kind of step a few steps away and ignore it. Now, as those of you who are old like me know, every now and then your knees start to hurt and can pop, so I am wearing shorts and I am outside on the phone and my knee is hurting so I do an air squat to pop my knee and the sharpest pain I have ever felt in my entire life hits the back of my calf (maybe slightly dramatic but at the moment it was horrible). And I look down and there was a bee and it's stinger lodged in my calf! *Now my buddy on the phone loses it, and I get the thing out of me and hobble back to the office.* It's throbbing, but I don't think I need surgery, and I am good. About thirty minutes later I get a call from my mother in law that Laura has been labouring slowly at the park and at our house and so it's time to come get her and head to the hospital, so I do just that. **And as we are driving to the hospital, she's breathing heavy, slightly sweating, obviously uncomfortable, breaking the fingers in my hand from her grip, there's a baby trying to come out of her, and I say something to the effect of, "babe, my calf really hurts from the bee sting..."** I'm not gonna repeat word for word what she said to me, but in a small way I related with what the Pharisees were doing. I was missing the bigger picture of what was going on because of a much smaller obstacle. For me it was a bee sting, for them, the sabbath..

And so John tells us that they bring the man who was FORMERLY blind to the Pharisees. So we have a back and forth between the Pharisees and the blind man. A blind man can now see, and those who think they see turn out to actually be blind.

Notice how the man is put on the spot as if he is the theologian in residence. He has been born blind, he now sees, and they want to know why. Tell us they say, how were you healed. He put mud on my eyes, the man responds, I washed it off, and now I can see. At this point there is a division among the Pharisees, some think Jesus can't be from God because he doesn't keep the Sabbath, while others think he must be from God because who could heal a

blind man? Even the blind man knows that this has never been heard of before, even in the Old Testament.

So they call in the parents, who know this is their son but are so fearful of being banned from the synagogue that they're of no help at all. Yes, he's our son. We don't know how he was healed. Ask him he's of age. So they bring the man back a second time, and this time he's a little irritated. A little more courageous. He knows that he has been healed, and here he is standing before this religious authority this council who is supposed to have keen insight into these things. And he realizes that they know nothing at all. Now the point here in this section is that the light of Jesus blinds people.

Another word for being spiritually blind is **unbelief**. Notice the **Characteristics of Unbelief** in this interaction between the man and the Pharisees. Unbelief is shown to be:

- **Prideful** (They are this religious elite who are supposed to know everything about God, everything about his Word. They keep talking down to this man as if he knows nothing. They are consumed by pride and unwilling to humble themselves and see their own need for Jesus). Not only is unbelief prideful, but its
- **Rigid** (They are not open to a change in their thinking, in their belief. They are so stuck on the issue of the Sabbath that they cannot appreciate a miraculous work of God right in front of them). It's rigid, but it's also...
- **Irrational** (If someone gives you true facts, and you come to the wrong conclusion, that is being irrational. They are asking the man again and again, "what did he do to you? How were your eyes opened?" He's already told the crowd, he's told the Pharisees, the parents have confirmed it was their son and to listen to his own account, and now he's tired of the games and tired of their irrational hypocrisy and their not listening and the sarcasm comes out, which excites me if I am being honest because I can be a little prone to this, and he says, "I already told you and you don't listen! Aren't you boys the theologians? Do you want to be his disciples too?" Boom. He did it. Games are over, there is no more listening. It's all confrontational from now on. "We are disciples of Moses, we know God spoke to Him!" To which the sarcastic yet clear truth rings out from the man:
 - **30** "This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. **31** We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. **32** Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. **33** If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything."
 - This interaction leads us to the last characteristic of unbelief, which is hostility.
- **Hostile** (Unbelief shows itself to be hostile to the things of God. Look at what they say in v. 24. Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner. Notice what they're saying. Give glory to God by acknowledging that Jesus is a sinner. This is blasphemy. Praise

God and demonize Jesus. Their hostility to Him knows no bounds because their eyes are blind to the very truth that keeps confronting them, this man is not only from God, he is one with God, truly God himself. And their hostility is shown in their response to the man's last remarks to them.

- **34** "You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.
- This casting out, or throwing out, language is strong and most see as the banishment from verse 22 that the parents feared. He has not been excommunicated from the synagogue. As before an outcast of society he is now cast out of the temple grounds.
- Jesus is the light of the world. This light will blind you or it will illuminate you. Let's close out the chapter and see how it illuminates. (GRAB BIBLE)

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, and when he found him, he asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" **36** "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?" he asked. **37** Jesus answered, "You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." **38** "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him. **39** Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind." **40** Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and asked him, "We aren't blind too, are we?" **41** "If you were blind," Jesus told them, "you wouldn't have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Response #2 - This Light Illuminates

These last few verses serve as a kind of summary and fitting conclusion to the story. Jesus is clear. At the beginning I told you that there is grace and judgment in this passage. Here are both of them together. Jesus explicitly says I have come into this world for judgment, that those who are blind to the things of God may come to see, and that those who think they understand and know the things of God will be blinded. We just looked at the response of blindness and God's judgment on that. But here we also see grace. What's amazing to see in this man's healing is his progression of faith. Jesus graciously restored his sight. "One thing I do know," he tells them, "I was blind and now I see!" But that statement, while speaking to the physical, was a foreshadow of what would happen in the spiritual. His eyes have been healed, but even more amazingly his eyes have been open to see the glory of Jesus Christ! Grace upon grace.

Look at the progression in the text, all responses to the question of who is this man?

- In verse 11, he calls him a man. In verse 17 he says he is a prophet. In verse 33 he says he's a man sent from God. And then in this interaction with Jesus in v. 38 he calls him Lord and worships him.
- "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" **36** "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?" he asked. **37** Jesus answered, "You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."
- I love the subtle imagery here used by Jesus. A blind man who comes to see Jesus. The man wants to believe in him, he is desiring to do this very thing, he just needs some direction. God has given him faith, he just needs to know who to put that faith in. You have seen him, Jesus says. And the man worships him. This man sees Jesus physically now, but he is now seeing Him spiritually as well. His understanding of

everything is not perfect, his theology is not air-tight, but he now believes in Jesus and worships him as Lord.

- Instead of the light blinding him to Jesus as it does to the Pharisees, it is now illuminating Jesus to him. He sees the Son of Man for who He is and I like to think continues to grow in his knowledge of Jesus.

So today, we are all confronted by this passage. Jesus is the light of the world. And we can only have one of two responses to this light. Has the light illuminated our eyes to see, illuminated them to see the beauty of Christ above all else, or do we think we see like the Pharisees, and are actually afflicted with unbelief.

Two biographies in this story.

We have that of the Pharisees. Those who are think they see but are blind. They are trapped in their sin because in Jesus they see nothing to desire, nothing to long for, nothing to want, and nothing to put their trust in. That's spiritual blindness, so would you ask yourself today, am I blind (spiritually blind)? Do I think I see but am blind to who Jesus is and what he has done for me, and how my life can never be the same afterwards? Jesus sought this man out and through the Holy Spirit he is seeking you out today.

And the other biography is that of the man. He WAS blind, physically. He was blind, spiritually. He was sought by the Lord, physically. He was sought by the Lord, spiritually. He's given physical sight, he's given spiritual sight. He then testifies about Jesus to the people. His family forsakes him. He winds up being cast out and hated by those who are enemies to the Gospel. Then he cries out "Lord" and worships at the feet of the Savior. He is, in a sense, a picture of what it means to be a Christian, a true worshipper of Jesus (GTY). So if that's you, praise God, now, for the miraculous work he has done in your life in giving you eyes to see and behold the glory of the one and only Son! To HIS name be the glory and honor forevermore.

Pray with me.