

February 15, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from John 9.

1. Why was the man in the story born blind?
2. Why did Jesus heal the man if the man did not request healing?
3. Why did the Jewish leaders doubt the man?
4. Do you think the man was born again?
5. Why?

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS IS DECEPTIVE

John 9

The story of Jesus healing the man who was born blind is one of the most intriguing stories in the Bible. Where the story occurs in John's account, between the arguments at the Feast of Tabernacles and the explanation of the Good Shepherd at the Feast of Dedication, renders it a powerful illustration of all that Jesus taught in those situations.

The healing of the blind man is the perfect illustration of John's point for writing this Gospel. He explained, *But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31).*

If you believe this story is factual, you have to believe that Jesus is who He said He is—God the Son come from God the Father in heaven to do work that brings glory to Him. That work being the

provision of salvation for sinners who acknowledge their need and by faith apply the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the covering for their offenses against God.

As we work our way quickly through the story today, we will realize that we cannot go away from it unaffected. If we believe the story is true, then Jesus has to be who He said He was—God the Son. Since He is God the Son, we must believe all that He taught. If we believe what He taught, we will conclude that He lived on this earth, died on the cross, and rose from the grave in order to provide the only acceptable sacrifice so that our sins can be forgiven.

The only other option is to believe that the story is not true, and, therefore, Jesus was an imposter, the Pharisees were right, and no one has any hope beyond the grave. That renders us much like animals who live, die, and . . . nothing! We are not like animals. God created us in His image, and everyone knows that in his or her conscience. Therefore, we need answers. This story provides a striking answer. People who have their spiritual eyes opened accept that Jesus is who He claimed to be. People who have spiritual blindness refuse to believe Jesus is Savior because they just can't see it.

The Story (vv.1-34).

Again in this situation, as in the other eight miracles John recorded, Jesus displayed the works of God (vv.1-12). This situation came up sometime after the Feast of Tabernacles. John identified the time and event, *As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth (v.1).* We can be quite sure that the Feast of Tabernacles was over. That would have been somewhere equivalent to the first week of our October. Another feast, the Feast of Dedication, would arrive a couple of months later near the end of our November.

Jesus had taught repeatedly that He had come from God in order to do the work of God. This was the topic throughout the discussions at the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews rejected Him, slandered Him by saying He had a demon, and attempted to stone Him. He walked away from them. Now at some point between the two feasts, Jesus and the disciples were still in Jerusalem. He has taught repeatedly over the past few days that He was on earth having come from heaven to do God's work. God's work was for Him to be the Light of the

world. God's work was for Him to dispel spiritual darkness. At the next feast, He will teach that He is the Good Shepherd and, therefore, not at all like the wicked and spiritually blind religious leaders.

Now we find Jesus in a situation that gave Him the opportunity to glorify God by being the Light-giver which was a great contrast to the religious leaders (vv.2-5). In that setting, the disciples saw what they thought was a common cause and effect of sin. *And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (v.2).*

It was commonly assumed and taught that particular ailments and suffering were the direct result of sin. We cannot argue against that idea since there are examples of such in the Bible. Miriam sinned by slandering Moses, and God struck her with leprosy immediately. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and God struck them dead. People in the church at Corinth partook of Communion in an unworthy manner and some were sick while others died. That is to name a few.

But all sickness and suffering is not the result of sin. Job was the most righteous man in the world, according to God's assessment, but he suffered intense physical ailment. Paul desired to have a physical ailment removed, but God gave him grace to endure it. Those cases help us understand that sometimes physical suffering provides an opportunity for God to do work for His glory. Such was the case with this blind man. Therefore, *Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him" (v.3).*

This was an opportunity for Jesus to prove what He had been teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles. He had said over and over that He had come to do the Father's work. Now He said, *We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work (v.4).* In a time of spiritual darkness, God's work is not seen. Jesus intended to give spiritual light as long as He was on earth. He said, *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world (v.5).* What better way to illustrate His work of giving light than to give a man who lived in the darkness of blindness physical light?

God the Son did what only God can do (vv.6-7). *Having said these things, He spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva.*

Then He anointed the man's eyes with the mud (v.6). Why did Jesus do the miracle in that way? Typically the devout Jews considered all bodily secretions to be ceremonially unclean. Therefore, when Jesus applied a ball of dirt and spit (which made mud) to this man's eyes, the man would have been rendered unfit to go and worship in the Jew's temple (which was supposed to be God's house).

Having put the man in a questionable state, according to the Pharisees' laws, Jesus told the man to go wash in a particular pool. He said to him, *"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent).* So he went and washed and came back seeing (v.7). The name Siloam meant "sent." God the Father sent God the Son to earth to do His work for His glory. That gave Jesus, God the Son, the authority to send this man to the pool to wash. Notice that Jesus took the authority over this man who never volunteered. He was minding his own business—begging near the temple like he did every day. The disciples called attention to the man's need. Jesus drew the man into the situation even though the man did not seek out Jesus.

There he was doing what he always did because he was blind. He was sitting in darkness trying to get by with a little help from his friends. Jesus walked up to him, put mud on his eyes, and commanded him to go wash in the pool at the other end of the city. If the man was sitting at the temple, which is likely, he needed to go about a half mile to the pool. Typically when Jesus gives a sinner light to see, it is a process in which the sinner is drawn into uncomfortable circumstances. We call it conviction of sin, by which the sinner finally understands that he or she has a need that friends can't meet. Jesus put this guy in some uncomfortable circumstances. But he followed through.

Confusion resulted from the work of God (vv.8-12). This happens when a sinner, who lived his whole life in spiritual darkness, suddenly experiences the work of God and now has spiritual light. Everything about him changes and friends and neighbors see it. So in this case, the blind man's friends took note. *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?" (v.8).*

But the change in the man was so radical that others denied it was even him. *Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him" (v.9a).* Well if you don't know, ask the guy! While they talked

like he wasn't even there the man *kept saying, "I am the man"* (v.9b). If this is the same guy, how did this amazing change come about? Ask Him. *So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"* (v.10). And he said, "It was this guy named Jesus." *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"* (v.11). *They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know"* (v.12).

What a great story. Here was the man who was blind from birth, minding his own business when Jesus changed his life. He simply obeyed what Jesus said because . . . Oh! . . . the man went to wash because he trusted Jesus' words—which is exactly what the religious people wouldn't do! So why did they want to know where Jesus was if they didn't trust what He said?

Not only did God's work cause confusion, but now God's works caused conflict among the authorities (vv.13-34). There was a problem with this wonderful work—in the opinion of the religious leaders. Jesus had done the good work on the Sabbath (vv.13-16). That meant that the healed man was party to breaking the Pharisee's law. *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* (vv.13-14). In the first place, they would have been disturbed that their perennial enemy Jesus healed the man. But worse was the fact that He did it on the Sabbath. Again Jesus proved that He had no regard for their rules! What a rebel against their authority He was.

The more the Pharisees learned about the blind man's healing, the more confused they were. They learned how the blind man came to have sight. *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"* (v.15). It was really quite a simple process. What is so hard to understand about, *He put mud on my eyes, I washed, I see?* The hypocrites' immediate conclusion was that in spite of the incredible miracle, because Jesus did not operate under their authority, He could not be from God. *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* (v.16).

What they really meant was, "This man is not from us." Somehow they had come to believe that God endorsed the rules they made. While God gave the command to honor the Sabbath, they so convoluted the command that even they couldn't keep it. Jesus chose to keep God's command about the Sabbath. Because of Jesus' response to Sabbath rules, a division erupted. The leaders couldn't agree about the source of the power behind the miracle. The sides contended that Jesus was God or He was a devil.

They could have turned to their Scriptures to learn the truth and find the answer to their conflict. Instead they chose to ask another mere person. The Pharisees wanted to know the blind man's opinion about Jesus (vv.17-23). *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"* (v.17). Why ask the man if they were not even sure the guy had been blind? *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 them, "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"* (vv.18-20).

Being afraid of the religious authorities, the parents were not about to put their neck on the line even for their son. *"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"* (vv.21-23).

Well, the Pharisees had already asked him, and they disagreed with the man's conclusion about Jesus (vv.24-34). They demanded that he give glory to God though they would not. Yes, they thought they were the only people in the world who gave God glory. They were wrong. *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"* (v.24). That Jesus is a sinner is the only conclusion you can draw if you don't believe what Jesus taught about Himself.

Not surprisingly, the Pharisees would not listen to the blind man any more than they would listen to Jesus (vv.25-27). He explained

that now he could see. *He answered, "Whether He is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" (v.25).* He wasn't going to debate with them about Jesus' spiritual state. He didn't know. Neither did they! One thing he did know was that he could see. The miraculous work Jesus did was impossible to deny. Therefore, the rulers didn't argue with the results. They were concerned about the means. They said to him, *"What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" (v.26).*

This was important due to the fact that the Pharisees had accused Jesus of being demon possessed. They accused Him of doing miracles through Satan's power. The answer to their question was so obvious, but they couldn't hear it. Jesus had told them that He had come to earth to do the Father's will. He taught that He was the Light of the world. God the Son could give light by simply speaking. But the critics who rejected Him needed concrete evidence so they could kill Him.

If you or I were the healed man, at this point would we not feel frustration? He certainly did. The religious hypocrites kept prodding him and *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?" (v.27).* Obviously, the man knew something about Jesus. He knew He was a teacher who had disciples. It is quite interesting that he accused the Pharisees of not listening. Jesus had told them the same thing over and over. What is worse, not being able to see truth or not being able to hear truth? The very religious people who attended "church" every Saturday could neither see nor hear!

They were blind and deaf because they perceived that they were the keepers of the truth (vv.28-34). The religious people explained the difference in discipleship. They were proud to be disciples of Moses! *And they reviled him, saying, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses" (v.28).* Or so they loved to claim. The problem is that Moses believed God and looked forward to the Prophet like himself that God would raise up—Jesus. Oh but these men knew all about God's relationship with Moses. *"We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He comes from" (v.29).* If they were so certain that God spoke to Moses, why didn't they obey what Moses taught instead of twisting it? They would not

have trusted Moses and would have argued against him just like their forefathers did.

The religious people explained that they "know!" but obviously they didn't. In contrast to them, the recipient of God's blessing uncovered the religious people's ignorance. *The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes" (v.30).* He implied that Jesus could not have opened his eyes if He were not from God like He said? In his response, this man demonstrated common human response to amazing work. He asserted that God listens to us! *"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" (v.31).*

We would agree with this statement generally. The man evidenced a fairly mature theology. God does not listen to the sinner until they confess sin and beg for forgiveness. God does listen to people who truly worship Him. Unlike the religious leaders who worshiped the creature rather than the Creator. They worshiped themselves. They worshiped their rules. People who pursue God's will have His ear. But God didn't listen to Jesus because He did all the right stuff. God listened to Jesus because He is the beloved Son, and because He is the beloved Son, He does all the right stuff.

Besides all that, *"Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind" (v.32).* Probably true that there was no evidence of a human opening the eyes of a fellow human. Obviously then, the man concluded that Jesus does God's work! *"If this man were not from God, he could do nothing" (v.33).* That was not an acceptable answer to the all-wise, all-knowing leaders! *They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out (v.34).* So who was really blind?

The Lesson (vv.35-41).

Important point number one is that the one whose eyes were opened worshiped (vv.35-38). In mercy Jesus went to the man after the rulers excommunicated him. He took the initiative to find him. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him (v.35a).*

Just as Jesus took the initiative to heal the blind man who did not ask for healing. Just as God always takes the initiative for us. We are spiritually blind because of our sin. Our sin keeps us from seeing and knowing truth. But one day God begins to draw and begins to peel the scales from our spiritual eyes. We begin to see truth, to understand that we are sinners and need a Savior.

And then at some point God presses the question of faith. *He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (v.35b)*. The title "Son of Man" spoke of the Messiah and all the work God promised He would do. So Jesus asks us as we begin to understand our need, "Do you believe that you are lost in sin and will pay the penalty of eternal suffering?" Faith in Christ means you believe that Jesus is the Christ, God the Son sent from heaven. It means that you believe that His blood is the sufficient sacrifice to pay for your sins. Do you believe that if you confess your sins to Him, He is able and authorized to forgive you? Do you have faith in the Messiah, Christ, Son of God?

The man expressed the desire for such faith. *He answered, "And who is He, sir, that I may believe in Him?" (v.36)*. The blind man had seen the Son of Man and had received incredible benefit as He opened the blind man's eyes. But the blind man had to believe. All the kindness of God does not give a sinner salvation until the sinner believes. God has done everything, revealed all that is necessary for faith. But you must have faith. You must trust Him. Cry out with the father of a demon-possessed boy, "Lord I believe! Help my unbelief!"

In mercy Jesus revealed Himself to the man. Jesus revealed that He is God the Son. *Jesus said to him, "You have seen Him, and it is He who is speaking to you" (v.37)*. That sounds like the same thing Jesus said to the Samaritan woman. Jesus never hesitated to tell the truth about who He is. That is why the authorities killed Him.

The man had faith and worshiped. *He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped Him (v.38)*. He expressed faith and then He worshiped. This is the expected response to genuine faith. The word means to bow down, or fall down on your face, to prostrate yourself. Genuine faith is always accompanied by genuine humility. The regenerated person understands that salvation is all of God's grace and mercy and not accomplished by any human works or merit. Happy is the man who has been thrown out of dead religion but given entrance into heaven!

In vivid contrast to this picture we see that the ones who claimed to see were left guilty (vv.39-41). Jesus warned them that spiritually blind people are judged people. *Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind" (v.39)*. Wait! Did Jesus come to judge or to save? Near the beginning of this book we studied, *For God so loved the world, that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him (John 3:16-17)*.

So which is it? Did Jesus bring salvation or judgment? Read the next two verses: *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil (John 3:18-19)*. The solution is simple. Failure to believe Jesus results in judgment. Jesus is your Savior or He is your judge—no alternatives. Jesus came as the Light of the world so that spiritually blind people will understand their need. And that same Light causes people who think they have salvation through their works to actually be spiritually blinded.

The Pharisees prove that spiritually blind people refuse to admit they are blind. *Some of the Pharisees near Him heard these things, and said to Him, "Are we also blind?" (v.40)*. Their question according to the Greek text is, "We are not also blind, are we?" They expected a negative answer. Their argument always was that they were the light of the world, their rules were the way to salvation. How then could they be blind? Many are the religious people of America who are horribly blinded by their dead traditions. On the day of judgment they will say, "Lord, Lord did we not do many wonderful works?" (Matt. 7:22).

Finally, Jesus warned that spiritually blind people are stuck in their blindness. *Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains" (v.41)*. When a sinner finally admits that he or she is spiritually blind, that person is on the way to spiritual sight. Assuming they are okay when they reject Jesus, reject His teaching, and refuse to

acknowledge they are sinners renders them hopelessly blind. Unless they change before they die, they will forever remain guilty before God.

Each of us is born spiritually blind. Many people think they have gained spiritual sight by going to church, being nice, or turning over a new leaf. Jesus wants us to learn that only through faith in what He has said about Himself will we ever be able to see spiritually. Do you believe Him?