

Once I Was Blind But Now I Can See

That You May Believe

By Dr. Liam Goligher

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Bible Text: John 9

Preached on: Sunday, March 22, 2015

Tenth Presbyterian Church

1701 Delancey Street

Philadelphia, PA 19103-6714

Website: www.tenth.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tenth

Do take your Bibles and turn to John 9, the passage we had read earlier. I think of all the characters in the Bible there is perhaps none that is painted in more lively tones than this character that we have presented in this chapter. It's very interesting that this is the one personality apart from our Lord on which John spends time telling you the story but also in telling you the story, telling you something of who this man was. If you weren't here last time, the first part of the chapter describes this man, a man born blind. It describes a dispute the disciples who assuming that it was generally understood in those days that somehow or other if you were born with an affliction of this kind that it was something to do with your parents, something to do with what they had done in the past, some sin that had been in the family line causing the problem and Jesus blows away that idea and heals the man. He heals the man thoroughly and it's quite a pantomime when the man goes back to his home where he lives and you find his neighbors talking among themselves in front of him wondering, "Is this him? Is it not him? Is this the man we saw? It can't be the man we saw because the man we saw every day, no, it's not the man we saw every day, this man can see. The other man couldn't," and so on and so the argument goes on back and forth and the poor man in the background of the conversation is insisting, "It is me! It is me!" And so on and so it's quite a pantomime.

Then we come to verse 13 that we're reading this evening. What we find as we go through this chapter is that the man's healing, this man's healing particularly, is drawing a division between Jesus and this group of leaders, the Pharisees, the people who were the religious hierarchy of their day, that the underlying tension that has been growing, in fact, already they wanted to stone him. Already they wanted soldiers to arrest him. They had already provoked that earlier on in the story but this hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees is now coming to a head; the underlying reaction to Jesus is now being exposed. And as we come this evening to look more closely at the clash between the blind beggar who has been healed by Jesus and the Jewish authorities, we find light thrown on a number of other issues that might be in your mind tonight. For example, you might be here as a Christian person asking the question, "Why aren't there more Christian people in the world?" Sometimes that question is asked with a bit of an edge to it, the attempt being to embarrass or dismiss Christianity, after all, we're only one third of the world's population and that is only one third of the world's population. Sometimes the question is asked with an air of sadness, with the sense, "Why is it that despite the

attractiveness of Jesus himself, why is it despite the fact of his claims and his miracles and his resurrection, people do not believe in him?"

Those kind of questions lead to the passage that we're considering this evening because the great lesson of this chapter is that in the context of this man's tragic background, his being blind from birth, we are learning about a greater blindness and an even greater tragedy. We are learning about spiritual blindness, the tragedy of not seeing, understanding, grasping, the comprehending the reality of what God has done in Jesus. In the bigger context of John's Gospel, this story is hung on a text, one text, Jesus claimed for himself, "I am the light of the world," he has said and so everything that is happening here is illustrating a big body of teaching that Jesus has already given. Jesus is the light of the world and this light dawns on, as we'll see increasingly, dawns on this formerly blind man and this light is missed by these religious leaders who get increasingly hardened in their rejection of him. So we find these 2 parallel tracks in this story. On the one hand we see this formerly blind man increasing in insight. Not only does he see with his eyes physically, he gets to see with his soul, with his heart. On the other side, the other parallel line is going in the opposite direction: there are these religious leaders and they are increasingly being hardened and blinded by the reality of Jesus.

So for example, the formerly blind man 3 times we're told that this man is gaining increasingly in his knowledge as he humbly confesses his ignorance. Three times in verse 12, 25 and 36 while 3 times, the Pharisees who are really plunging into ever deeper ignorance, are making confident statements about what they think they know and they are wrong in verse 16, verse 24 and verse 29. And this blind man, as I've said, emerges as one of the most attractive figures in the Gospel. The more he is interrogated and interrogated he is by the authorities, the more his faith grows, his insight deepens and we find him progressing from saying that his benefactor was a man they called Jesus, verse 11, to saying that his benefactor is the prophet in verse 17, to saying that he is from God, verse 33, and then after meeting Jesus and being interrogated by Jesus, he confesses that Jesus is the Son of Man. So you see the blind man's eyes are increasingly opening. They are becoming more open to the truth, to reality, while the leaders are becoming evermore obdurate and hard-hearted.

So here we have a true story brilliantly retold with theological significance. So let's walk our way through the story. Let's look at these leaders because they really get into the stage at this point and these leaders, first of all, we notice put half truths before the whole truth. You'll notice that the key thing about this healing miracle that Jesus performed we're told, was that he had healed this man on the Sabbath day. You might say, "Well, it wouldn't matter what day of the week it was. It was a great thing to do. To take a man who was born blind, perhaps a man who had had no eyes and to create sight in the man's eyes. That was a remarkable thing to do whatever day of the week he did it." Why does John emphasize right at the beginning of the story when he's telling house this man was healed, "Now it was the Sabbath day"? There is almost an ominous tone to that, an ominous tone to that. It shouldn't be there but it's true. Here is the day, a day that was designed to provide rest to enable service and to focus worship in the lives of God's people. A day in which, in a sense, we ought to be alive. People ought to have been alive

with a knowledge of God, bristling with an understanding of who God is and what God's concerns are in the world. And the God whom they were worshiping, they were Jews, they were worshiping a merciful God, a caring God, a God who delighted to do significant things for his people.

You just know that these leaders had created a change this day from a day to provide rest, enable service and focus worship and they turned this day into a minefield of man-made rules and regulations. You can feel it in verse 14 when we have this report, "Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes." That little piece of information sets us up for the first interrogation by the Pharisees. You can see from the sentence in verse 14, the stress on making the mud. Making the mud. What does that suggest to you? It suggests to the Pharisees effort, energy. It suggests work. Work. And they are going to make something of Jesus making the mud on the Sabbath day.

What was their argument? Their argument went probably something like this: Jesus could have waited until the next day to heal the man but what had he done? He had taken and he had kneaded clay with his – kneaded being k-n-e-a-d-e-d, kneaded. You don't do that anymore. You've got to pack it and you put it in the thing and you add water in order to make whatever it is you're making. But he had taken the made clay when with his saliva had made it into mud. He was making mud pies and he had kneaded it, brought it together the way you do, well, you don't know how to do it all but if you did know how to do it all, like you do with dough. Not dough the money, the other dough and by analogy, clay here. So he had done the kind of work you might do to make bread if that had been ingredients for bread. It was work and it was one of the 39 classes of work forbidden by the Pharisees for the Lord's day and actually, later, it's interesting, later Jewish tradition after this event added a tradition that it was forbidden to anoint eyes on the Sabbath. What do you think they were doing? They were getting at Jesus for having done that. They were adding that even after the event. You can see that the action is what alerts the thought police and immediately there is a reaction.

No, we just need to pause for a moment and understand that what we have developing here is the radical unbelief of the leadership of the Jewish people at this point in Jesus' ministry and it was something that wasn't new going way back to the time of the Exodus, in fact, you could go further back, right back to Abraham and you can see that there is a line of unbelief that you find as well as the line of faith, a line of unbelief when it comes to the word of God and the promises of God. Israel was like this throughout its history. They had great promises of God that God would give them a land and that that land would be the foretaste of the new heavens and the new earth. That great promise of the land, a land flowing with milk and honey. A land that would be theirs to keep and the second promise of the Messiah who would come and he would bring salvation.

Yet consistently from the point at which they were giving the promise of the land, they had complained and had resisted God. In one of the Psalms, Psalm 78 for example, we read these words, "They spoke against God, saying, 'Can God spread a table in the wilderness?'" You see, they were in the desert after escaping Egypt. "He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat

for his people?" They are complaining all the time. "Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel, because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power." That was their history. That was their history. And in the end it was that disbelief that lost them the land. When they went into exile into Babylon and although some of them came back as we've been learning from the book of Isaiah, some of them came back and they reestablished themselves in a bit of the land. They never enjoyed the fullness of the land that God had promised to them ever again. They were excluded. They were in exile and by the time Jesus came, they had been still in exile in their own land under one regime after another of external powers. They found themselves, at this point, under the rule of Rome. Here were people who in their history had been warned again and again and again and again not to harden their hearts, to hear the word of God. They repeated it in their synagogue services as they sang, the choirs would sing the Psalms and as they sang these words, again and again, "If you hear the Lord's voice, don't resist him. Don't harden your hearts." And here they are, these leaders, and what are they doing? They are hardening their heart. They are disbelieving. They will not believe.

So we find a division among them as some jumped to the conclusion, "This man," that is, Jesus, "is not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath." Well, there were others who were more conciliatory, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs as these?" And the debate that is going on, of course, among the Pharisees reflects the 2 great principle teachers of the Pharisees, the 2 schools of thought: the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel, and the one based on the foundational theological principles, anyone who breaks the law is a sinner, the others who argued from facts, Jesus had performed a good work therefore he must be of God. And these half-truths about the Sabbath, they disregarded the fact that indeed the Sabbath observance in its original form was a fairly simple, straightforward day of rest and worship and service and they had piled upon it all kinds of rules and regulations so that it was obscured.

The Pharisees were obviously therefore divided over what to think about Jesus. They are unsure what view to take of him and so they reapply their pressure on the blind man. "So they said again to the blind man, 'So what do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes? What is your take?'" And the man says, "he is a prophet." Calling Jesus a prophet was probably the highest position the man could think of at that moment, the highest position that he could think to give a man at that moment. That's his verdict, his verdict that he gives to those who said, "This man is not from God."

Now, do you see what this formerly blind man is doing? This formerly blind man is already taking sides. He is talking to these authorities who have already said, "This man is not from God," and he's saying to these people, "He is a prophet. He has been sent by God." That was a very bold step to take and already we're seeing that something else has happened in this blind man. Already something has been going on in his heart and his mind beyond the physical miracle that made him see. Already he is beginning to see something about Jesus. One of the first things a person understands when he begins to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that the word of Jesus, what Jesus has to say, is more than human. It is more than normal. It is more than natural. It has a God dimension to

it. That's what this man was grasping. This Jesus speaks for God and that his eyes are really becoming open. You notice he is already taking sides. He is already confessing Jesus before these leaders who say that he is not from God and his disagreement with them will deepen. But already this man's testimony to these men, he is telling them, "He is a prophet. He is speaking the word of God. You've got him wrong." Already this man's testimony is part of the judgment that Jesus is going to bring upon Israel for their rejection of their Messiah.

The second thing these leaders do is this: they put prejudice before facts, verses 18-23. The evidence we've seen if you were here last week was already strong that this man had been healed by Jesus. We saw that some of his neighbors recognized him, verse 8. He himself repeats over and over again that he is the same man in verse 9, 11, 15, 25 and 30. He has absolutely nothing to gain by sticking to a story that is not true but the Pharisees wanted to be sure that they had all the facts right so 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," three questions, "Is this your son? Was he born blind? How is it that he now sees?" Three questions to his parents and you notice their approach: they're not just asking for information, they are challenging the absurdity of this, "Can you believe this? We really can't understand. Is he your son? Was he really born blind? How come he now sees?" They were putting them on the spot. They were putting pressure on them. They were intimidating them. It would have sounded to these parents as if they were setting themselves up to fall into a trap so when his parents answered, they answered the first 2 questions very easily, of course. "This is our son. He was born blind. But how he now sees we have no idea." They did know but they told a lie. "Nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." A very nice exit strategy from that pressure. And of course, they're confirming, aren't they, this was their son. He had been born blind. He now sees but they feign ignorance because they are trying to cover themselves. They're trying to avoid, in fact, the text tells us they are trying to avoid getting dragged deeper and deeper into the debate out of sheer fear.

Now, it's astonishing, isn't it, how reluctant the Pharisees are to believe the man. They would rather believe their prejudices rather than the facts staring them in the face. This is what unbelief does: it avoids the facts of the matter and it speaks to its prejudices. Unbelief has already made up its mind what it's going to think about something before it hears what you have to say. Unbelief is blinded by its own hubris. It believes it is the center of the world. These people were just downright prejudiced toward Jesus. As far as they were concerned, he had a different interpretation of the Sabbath to theirs, therefore he was wrong. Therefore he was not a follower of Moses as they were. He didn't have theological qualifications from one of their seminaries. He did not come from the proper social background. They suspected his origins. They were suspect that there was immorality somewhere there. They were jealous of his success. They found his arguments irresistible. So what do they do? They do what people who are out-argued always do: they respond with anger, bluster, slander and accusation. Spiritual blindness is irrational. Spiritual blindness is visceral. It comes from the gut, it does not come from the mind. It is driven by prejudice.

The third thing we learn from this is that the leaders put argument before decision, verses 24 to 38. In other words, these people are always arguing but never coming to a conclusion. They are always asking questions but they don't want to find the answer and so for a second time, here's a second round of interrogation, for a second time they call the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God." They get all spiritual in their language. You know that there are people like that, if they really want to put pressure on you, that's what they'll do, they'll start using spiritual language. That's what they do to this man. "Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner." Now, what are they saying to the blind man? They are not asking him to give his testimony, they are telling him or they're asking him or inviting him to confirm their viewpoint, "Give glory to God." That was kind of a solemn exhortation, "Tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God. Give glory to God."

They wanted him to make a confession. They are implying that perhaps up to this point he hasn't been giving glory to God, he's been telling a pack of lies. John who is writing this loves these ironic touches because this man is going to give glory to God. He already has in calling Jesus a prophet. He's going to give glory to God by the way he's answering these questions honestly as he goes along. But these people asking the questions, have already tried, convicted and condemned Jesus in their minds. This is not an objective inquiry. This is not a normal cross examination. These people are judge, jury and executioner and they've already decided this man is a sinner. They want to discredit Jesus. They want proof to underline, "This man is a sinner." Can you imagine this? What are they speaking about? The the sinless, spotless Son of God. They are speaking about God the Triune, the second person of the holy Trinity. They are saying about God, God's Son, full of the Holy Spirit, "This man is a sinner." They have no idea what they are saying. They have no idea the depth of corruption that is being exposed the more they go on in their discussion with this man. They have no idea how they are condemning themselves before God in heaven by calling the Son of God a sinner.

The ex-blind man is willing to leave a definition of sin up to these experts but he will not shrink from testifying to the facts. Look at what he says, "He answered, 'Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.'" Dr. Boice who has ministered here for a long time did his doctoral work on the idea of witness in John's Gospel and this man here is an instance of a person bearing witness, personal witness to Christ. The Pharisees' theoretical and dogmatic assumptions ran into the indisputable, unalterable fact of this man's restored sight. What is he doing? He's bringing them back to the facts. He said, "You can theorize about what sin is and what sin isn't if you want. You can come up with your own ideas of how you identify and define a sinner. That's what you do. But here are the facts, here are the simple facts: once I was blind, now I can see. Work it out. Do the math. I was blind, now I see. Who did that to me? Who did that to me? How did that happen? You work it out."

So they go further, they try another tack. When you are silenced, that's what you do. The 2 realities that collide here are the man's sight and Jesus' guilt in the eyes of the authorities so they have to get Jesus somewhere so they say to him, "What did he do to

you? How did he open your eyes?" Now, on one level that was just cross examination. Jewish jurisprudence required diligent cross-examination in assessing evidence and that was important because, by the way, it's important to us, because in their cross examination they indirectly fortify our belief and faith in Jesus. In their cross examination, they make it clear that the Gospel claims about Jesus' healing ministry are fact. Here is this one instance that gets a lot of press. It gets a whole chapter devoted to it in John's Gospel. It was obviously a well-known story. It had gone to the highest authorities. They checked it out. They had done everything they could to discredit the man and couldn't. They did everything they could to try and get to the bottom of it and the bottom of it was what John says happened. Once he was blind, now he can see.

So they come back to him and they say, "What did he do to you?" And he answered them, "I have told you already and you would not listen." This man is beginning to see these people for what they are and notice the irony with which he speaks, "I told you before and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" Nod, nod, wink, wink. Don Carson says this man had quite an extraordinary gift of sardonic repartee if only he would say that. He's expecting a negative answer, the interrogative particle there indicates that he was expecting "no" to be the answer, "we're not wanting to be his disciple." But do you notice that he is now coming very clearly out as a disciple of Jesus himself? He's unabashed by the high-pressure tactics and his question, his apparently innocent but not perhaps as innocent as it would seem question, hits the nail on the head? Here it is, it's possible to engage in religious debate and discussion without ever really wanting to come to a conclusion, without ever really wanting to get to an end point where you actually do something about what you have discovered or been taught. That was what this man recognized. They were not wanting to find the truth, they were wanting to pin a lie on Jesus. Not find the truth that Jesus was teaching. Maybe you're like that. Maybe you've been avoiding coming to a conclusion. You've been seeking and searching and reading and you know you are interested in Christianity and you pop into a church now and then and you listen to what's being said and you're always searching but never coming to a knowledge of the truth. You are like these Pharisees.

Once put on the spot by this man, do you notice their pretense of objectivity drops entirely. The sophisticated language of inquiry gives way to the guttural language of abuse. This man has seen through their attempts to trip him up and twist his evidence in favor of their ideas and so what do they do? They revile him. Their prejudice erupts in full force. They hurl insults, that's what the word means. They hurl insults at him. They throw their insults at him. They reviled him. They resort to sarcasm which is a common way to deal with people of perceived social or intellectual lower class. "And they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses,'" the great prophet of Israel. "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from. We don't know who he is." They self identify his disciples of Moses. Of course, what they were doing in this debate about the Sabbath was they were ascribing to Moses more than Moses was responsible for. Moses had given them the Scripture, he had not given them their oral tradition. He had given them the written Scripture. Jesus had affirmed the final authority of Scripture. Jesus had underscored the

work of Moses in the law. He had underscored the correctness of what Moses had revealed. He was not opposed to what Moses had said, he was opposed to what they were adding onto Moses. Jesus understood and believed the authority and veracity of Scripture, he did not accept the authority and veracity of their oral tradition.

This rejecting of Jesus, this distinguishing Jesus from Moses, "We don't know where he comes from," what they're doing is this: they are dismissing Jesus and their dismissal of Jesus is final and damning. Now, there is one legal problem here. In the Jewish jurisprudence of the time, in any judicial proceeding such as this, it was required by their own law that they do a background check on the person being charged with wrongdoing. And by their own admission, do you notice, they had failed to do this, "We do not know where he comes from." This formerly blind man, he could have been a lawyer actually or maybe he's too intelligent for that, I don't know, but he's very intelligent and he picks up on what they have said. He picks up on what they have said. The man who was born blind becomes their teacher. Do you notice his tone of gently mocking? "The man answered, 'Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. Should you not know this? I mean, you are the guys with the power. You're the guys with the responsibility. You are the guys at the very top of the tree. You should know about these things. Surely, you should've looked into that. Surely, you should know absolutely where he came from. You're telling me that you don't know that fundamental thing and yet you're accusing him? He opened my eyes. You don't know where he comes from yet he opened my eyes.'"

Now, you remember they had a little syllogism of their own as they were dismissing Jesus. "He's not from Moses. We don't know where this man comes from." This man has his own little argument. Notice what it is? Here's the argument: "We know God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him." God does not listen to sinners. Second, "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." Now, you have to admire the man's tenacity and boldness as he contrasts with the timidity of his parents. He's saying, "You religious experts haven't worked out a simple question like where he is from. Here I am an uneducated man lecturing you, the elite, on your responsibility. Here's what I want to say to you. Here is what I want to teach you guys, you should know this: God doesn't listen to sinners. There has never been the case of a man born blind being given sight. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. But what has he done? He has made me see. He has made me see."

You see, there is a bigger picture here. These Pharisees are so enraged that they fail to forget that the explicit promises of God in their own Scripture that sight would be restored in the age of the Messiah. Isaiah 29, "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see." Isaiah 35, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped." Isaiah 42, "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon." Opening the eyes of the blind was Messiah's job. Jesus had

said, "I am the light of the world," quoting Isaiah 42. This was the obvious indication that he is the light of the world, he has made a blind man see.

They ignore all of that and they resort to complete and unfettered mockery. Literally it reads like this, "You," to the man, "You in sins were born entirely and you are teaching us? You are teaching us?" Notice that by saying that he was steeped in sin from birth they are tacitly admitting that he was, in fact, born blind. There is something fundamentally self-righteous in their thinking as they link this man's sinfulness from birth with his physical defect without including themselves under the status "sinful from birth," because the reality is we all are sinful from birth. "In sin my mother conceived me," said one of their greatest leaders.

"And they cast him out." Without any due process. They excommunicate him from the synagogue, from the worship of God. And having been abandoned by the religious authorities, "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said," to the man, "'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'" And the man answered, "'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.'" The Son of Man. In Judaism they understood who that was. This is the divine human figure of Daniel 7. A figure who is enthroned in glory, the glory of God. The figure to whom is given a kingdom that is everlasting and eternal. A figure who sums up, as it were, the purposes of God for the future. This great cosmic being, the Son of Man, and Jesus is saying to this man, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" This guy already knows enough to challenge the Pharisees. He would know who the Son of Man was. "'Who is he, sir?' You have seen him and he said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshiped him." This is the first time in the Gospels anybody is said to have worshiped Jesus.

This blind man saw. He saw. His eyes were open. Not just his physical eyes, that was the least of the miracles. He saw who Jesus was. He had gone from seeing Jesus as a man and a benefactor in verse 11 to seeing him as a prophet who speaks the word of God in verse 17 to now worshipping him in verse 39. That's how the eye-opening work of God's Holy Spirit works in a person's life. That's what it means to have been spiritually blind but now to be able to see spiritually who Jesus is. Here is a tragedy of Israel. Here is a tragedy of the Pharisees as they move in the opposite direction. "This man Jesus is not from God," verse 16. Verse 22, "If anyone should confess Jesus to be Messiah, he is to be put out of the synagogue." Verse 24, "This man Jesus is a sinner." And to the beggar, verse 34, "You were born in utter sin and you cannot teach us anything." That's where unbelief goes. That's where blindness takes you. "You can't teach me anything. I won't believe and I won't listen to you. You can't tell me anything. I know. I'm convinced. My preconceived ideas are set in stone and they will not change."

So Jesus says that he did not come to judge, that is, he had already said, "For judgment I came into this world," but now he means inevitably that whenever he comes into the world a division happens. He exposes rebellion in people's hearts. The people who say they know and they can see and they can understand suddenly realize that they don't see him and they don't grasp him and they don't understand him and they don't believe in him. The word of God does that. It causes division among people wherever the word of

Jesus and the Gospel is preached. It causes division among people. It's inevitable. The Gospel exposes those who think they know from those who really come to see the truth as it is in Jesus.

This conversation between the healed man and the Pharisees is filled with Gospel irony. He who sees for the first time in his life reveals the long-standing blindness of the Pharisees. They only see the law but the healed man sees the Messiah to whom it points. In their hubris, the Pharisees can only boast about Moses. In his humility, the healed man only boasts about Jesus. The Pharisees charge the healed man with walking in the darkness of sin that he sees the light of the world, the Son who made the Son and everything else. The Pharisees excommunicated him from the life of the temple, Jesus made him a living stone in the only true and lasting temple, Jesus Christ himself.

Well, the whole of the Christian life consists of getting to know Jesus better and better and we see that in the story of this man as he progresses. I think when a person becomes a Christian they don't know very much, they don't grasp very much. That's why in a church like ours we have a very high standard for those who are officers of the church of what they should believe and we make the step over into membership of the church as low as it can possibly be, just believing in Jesus. You may not be able to articulate what Jesus is and all that he is. You come to learn that as time passes as you grow in your understanding. Like this man, he grew in his understanding. But when your eyes have been opened, you will grow in your understanding. You will see. You will immediately, as it were, know that you have taken a step into a different realm altogether. You will identify yourself with Jesus. Even though you don't understand it all, you identify with him. You are teachable. You want to hear. You want to listen. You want to grasp more of who he is. That's what it means to have your eyes opened to the truth. And when you're praying in your small groups, when you're praying on your own, when you're praying for the world, don't forget to pray that God by his grace would open blind eyes to see the glory of the Lord Jesus. Don't forget to beseech the battlements of heaven that God would pour out upon our country such a movement of his Holy Spirit that people who are entrenched in their spiritual blindness would have the scales removed and see Jesus for who he is and come to know him for themselves. Would you do that?

Let's pray for that right now. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that as we've read this great story with this colorful figure who one day we shall meet in glory, we thank you for the way in which by his own experience having been given physical sight, we see even more wonderfully his spiritual sight develop as he grasps more and more as time passes who Jesus is. We pray, Lord, we pray for our friends. We pray for people in this room who don't see that yet, that you would open their eyes to see it. We pray for people all around us in this great city that you would open their eyes to see it. We pray for so many people in our country who do not see Jesus for who he is, that you would open their eyes to see him. We long, Lord, for you to pour out your Spirit upon us. We long, Lord, that you would touch the eyes of those who are blind, blinded by the God of this age, and that you would show to them the

*glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ through his word. In his strong name we pray.
Amen.*