

Sight for the Blind

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[0 : 0 0] So John chapter 9 verses 1 to 8 and then verses 24 to 41 As he passed by He saw a man blind from birth and His disciples asked him Rabbi who sinned This man or his parents that he was born blind and 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 And having said these things he spat on the ground and he made mud with the saliva And then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and he said to him go wash in the pool of Siloam Which means sent So he went and washed and he came back seeing and the neighbors and those who had sent him before

Seen him before as a beggar were saying is this not the man who used to sit and beg? in the verse 24 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's a sinner I do not know one thing I do know that though. I was blind now. I see They said to him what did he do to you?

How did he open your eyes and he answered them? I've 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 Uttersen 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? 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 that 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. This is God's holy word Tonight we are looking at the story of Jesus healing the blind man and John 9 The man born blind I think is someone even if we've read this for the first time someone that we instinctively cheer for Jesus heals him off his blindness He comes back from washing his face in the pool and then almost the whole chapter from then on is filled with him being interrogated by his neighbors by the Jews by the Pharisees and we didn't read it but his parents are off-scared hiding and as the audience we just read it we're watching it all go down the elite you know they back him into a corner and he just shrugs his shoulders speaks his mind and it's a pretty lively guy and I you know we I think we call them comebacks today if someone's having a go at you you've got a quick way to reply

[4 : 02] And either they leave you alone or they get more wound up and the man born blind is full of comebacks and he carries the story Through this interrogation which gets more and more intense until the very end when Jesus returns and speaks to the man and the Pharisees and it's when Jesus returns right at the end of the story and he says something absolutely central to why we celebrate Christmas to why we celebrate Christmas this huge discussion takes up the whole chapter and that the very end Jesus comes back and he says this is why I came this is why I came you know I think we work out quite quickly in the story is that physical blindness has very little to do with the story at all we do have it we do have this blind man but blindness isn't really seen in him it's seen in the Pharisees the problem is not a tall physical blindness but spiritual blindness that becomes clearer and clearer until eventually Jesus returns at the end of the story and he says this in verse 39 for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind why was Jesus born why do we celebrate Christmas because he came so that those who do not see may see he came to give sight to the blind so we have three main ideas to think about tonight in relation to that

Jesus was born to give sight to the blind just three things to think about firstly something about suffering and judgment two huge ideas and the book end this chapter in verses 2 and 3 the disciples ask if it was specifically because of this man's sin that he was born blind and Jesus says no no not at all it was so that the works of God might be done in him this chapter raises a lot of questions about suffering too many to ask an answer tonight one takeaway when Jesus says that is the fact that God values human life very very highly here you've got this man born blind which in his day meant complete separation from the rest of society there's no cure there's no relief whatsoever and it puts you in the margins in a way that it doesn't really today or not as much at least

Jesus in another scene he's at a feast and he tells his host that he shouldn't be inviting just the rich and the prominent people but he should be inviting the poor the crippled and the blind blindness was so common and so serious that you were marginalized by your society and the only choice for many like for this blind man in verse 8 is to sit at the side of the street and beg and not only that but the people think he deserves it the religious view of the day was that specific sin will absolutely lead to specific suffering if you do this then you will suffer in this way the disciples wonder just maybe if it's because of this man's sin that he was born blind did he somehow sin in the womb and that's why he's born with this condition did his parents do something and he's been punished for it ever since they're only wondering that the Pharisees come on the scene in verse 34 and say you were steeped in sin from birth that's the cultural view you've got a man who's cut off from the rest of society and society looks at him and says you deserve it you deserve it

Jesus is leaving the temple he sees him he goes to him and he says no that's not the case at all but it's so that the works of God might be displayed and when he's saying that one thing he is saying is that human life is valuable this man is valuable he might have been born blind he might be on the side of a street begging the people might think he deserves it but what does God say what does Jesus say his life as a purpose his life is valuable and you know God looks at you and he says that your life is valuable we've been thinking about that recently in the mornings looking at creation in Genesis 1 and 2 it's not your ability to reason and work and plan for the future that makes your life valuable it's not any of that that gives life value life is valuable because God thought and knew you and created you

God says that much to Jeremiah before I formed you in the womb I knew you life is valuable because the one God father son and spirit spoke about you before time he loved humanity he loved you before you even made Robert Jensen he's an American theologian or he was and he helps us picture this when he says that we exist because before time God spoke about us I exist and you exist because God spoke to himself about us and called us valuable is it suffering that determines the value of this blind man's life no life is valuable your life is valuable because God says it is because God the maker of the universe loves the people that he has made at the same time Jesus comes in verse 39 and says that he came for judgment what does he mean?

[10 : 40] alarm bells should be ringing if you've read the rest of John's Gospel in John chapter 3 Jesus says I did not come for judgment and here he says for judgment I came Jesus did not come to judge specifically he didn't come to point the finger but he enters into history and becomes one of us and begins to tell the world he begins to tell us that there is something wrong with our hearts he tells us that we're blind and he has stepped into humanity to make it right and humanity is divided that's what judgment means Jesus came to show what life is meant to be and humans have said ever since that day that they're either compelled by him or against him history is divided God values and loves every person that he has made he knew us before time began he sent his son to fix our blindness and we are divided we don't want to be told that we are blind so secondly see here our spiritual blindness the point of this chapter what does it mean that we are blind? Jesus says he came to give sight to the blind what about that has been causing division ever since he said it the Bible speaks about sight and it doesn't always mean physical sight very often it doesn't mean physical sight and nor do we this past week Spotify Wrapped came out something that we all look forward to at this time of the year now it's become a bit of a tradition

Spotify will keep track of the artists, the albums, the genres that you listen to for the whole year and then at the end of the year it will create this remontage and it will tell you all about your listening habits and well we listen to music based on how we feel we listen to music based on what we're going through and it can be a bit surprising maybe for some of us when Spotify says you listen to this one song hundreds of times you were in the top 0.5% of listeners for this one album or for this one band or singer or that July was your synth pop phase and October was your classical concert phase you're surprised at first maybe and then you think about it and you say oh I see, I understand, it makes sense, that's how I was feeling at that time in the year six months ago that's why I listened to that type of music so much

I see, well you don't see anything but you realize you understand why for me I understand or I understood the way I was feeling or thinking six months ago and you say I see now, I understand what has been true of me this past year the Bible speaks of sight in the same way very often and when it speaks about sight as knowledge it speaks about spiritual sight and it says we don't have it as the theme all the way through the Bible we don't have spiritual sight but we are spiritually blind what is spiritual blindness?

what does it mean to be spiritually blind? it means to not see, to not know, it means to be blind to the seriousness of your sin on one hand and at the same time be blind to the fact that you need someone to save you from it Cody mentioned this morning that he'd been trying to find a clear definition for boredom and what it means and I had been doing something similar with spirituality there is a rise in spirituality, more and more people today say that they are spiritual but it comes with a lot of questions, what does that mean to be spiritual?

people say many different things, is it religious? is it not religious? am I a body with a soul? am I a soul with a body? one theme or idea from what I find out, one theme or idea that runs through every definition is the idea of turning inward and seeking the depths of your existence and finding ways to help you understand your existence more and more you can go on Google Maps and type in spirituality into the limits of Edinburgh and you find crystal shops and palm readers and meditation centers all over the sea you can buy or experience something that's going to tell you more about your inner self Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians says that spirituality is not firstly about growing in yourself or loving yourself or healing yourself not in any way, in chapter 4 of 2 Corinthians he says firstly that spirituality is about knowing the gospel of the glory of Christ spirituality is about knowing and seeing what God has said in the gospel about who you are and more importantly who he is spiritual blindness is not knowing what has always been true of us we are far worse sinners than we think we are we are not as good as we think we are we are broken and on top of that we need to be saved so look at how that's seen in this chapter

[17 : 13] Jesus heals this man of his physical blindness we didn't read the middle of the chapter but the man's neighbors are sure that this can't be the same man is this really the man that was blind that we knew?

yes it's me he says how do you see them? this man Jesus he healed me and then the pharisees appear did this man Jesus really heal you on the Sabbath?

he must be a sinner what did he do to you? I've told you already you want to hear that again? you want to become his disciples? no no we are disciples of Moses well if this man wasn't from God he wouldn't have been able to do it how dare you they say how dare you you were born in utter sin and would you teach us?

what is spiritual sin here? or spiritual blindness here it's to ask why Jesus healed him on the Sabbath it's to claim to be disciples of Moses it's to say that this man is a sinner and you are not in other words it's to think that you're better or safer than you are Tim Keller on this chapter he says it's a question of pride and you see that in the pharisees they obey the Sabbath they are disciples of Moses they obey the law they live well they're not a sinner like this man clearly is he was born blind they think they're better than they are spiritual blindness is not just knowing that you're a sinner you're a sinner or that you sin and leaving it out of that we can acknowledge all of us can acknowledge that we sin we talk behind each other's backs we lie we put people down we make out that we are better than other people the list goes on we know that we act in a way that strikes the conscience that says man I shouldn't have said that

I shouldn't have done that we all do that spiritual blindness is understanding that and not seeing that you need to be saved from it spiritual blindness is the pride of the pharisees to believe that you are better than you are and to believe that you don't need to be saved do you see the importance of coming tonight and saying very simply I am a sinner I have put my hands up to God and said no thank you I have run away from him and no amount of being good is going to fix that however hard I tried to convince myself Jesus came so that you would see who you really are he came to tell you you are blind you are not as good as you think you are and actually you need grace that's what spiritual sight is to see who you are apart from God and know that you need grace

[20 : 31] Jesus was born to tell you that so lastly see Jesus in this chapter who seeks out the spiritually blind God highly values the people he has made we reject him in our spiritual blindness and yet Jesus was born and he came to seek out the blind Jesus we have already made clear he said that this man's suffering is not specifically because of this man's sin in a more general sense it is the result of living in a fallen world things not being as they should be he is not blind as a consequence of something he has done he is blind simply because he and everyone else around him and everyone that has ever existed apart from Jesus is a sinner he is suffering in a fallen world and that is clear the more we read into this chapter the man he doesn't know who Jesus is the Pharisees say in verse 24 give glory to God in other words whatever you say next better be the truth we know this man was a sinner and he says I don't know

I don't know if he is a sinner or not the man born blind on his own he doesn't know what to say he doesn't go after Jesus what is the significance of Jesus being the one who finds the man at the end of the story at the start it makes sense that the man can't see of course Jesus approaches him but why at the end does John make the point of saying that Jesus finds him in verse 35 it is just to say that spiritual blindness can only be turned to spiritual sight because Jesus is the one who comes after us spiritual blindness is not knowing how damaging our sin is not understanding that we need to be saved from it and Jesus is the one who comes and opens our eyes he says here is what has always been true about you what is the significance of Jesus seeking out the blind man seeking out the spiritually blind you can never know him if he didn't do it at the start of the chapter Jesus calls himself the light of the world and when he is saying that he is just repeating and summing up what he has been saying for the past three chapters in John in chapter 8 he speaks to the crowd and he says

I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life darkness, spiritual blindness is healed because the light stepped into the darkness not because we reach our hand out of the darkness life as it was meant to be a relationship experiencing the grace of God now and in eternity the light of life he calls it can only be known because he stepped into the darkness why do we put Christmas lights up at this time in the year some of us far too early I think why do we put Christmas lights up because we know that we need light in the darkness inside ourselves we know there is something in us that says we need light to shine in the darkness how can you receive spiritual sight how can your blindness be healed because the light stepped into the darkness and became a man and because he fell every part of that darkness when he hung on the cross

Mark in his gospel says this about Jesus' death and when the sick thawed had come there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour and Jesus cried out my God, my God, why have you forsaken me Jesus seeks the same thing Jesus seeks the spiritually blind we are given sight we are given life as it is meant to be not by reaching out but because the Son experienced such darkness for us that he had to ask his own Father why have you forsaken me the blind are found we are found because Jesus came into the darkness and experienced every part of it for us God loves His creation He values it far more than we know we reject Him because we are spiritually blind and yet Jesus came to give sight to the blind

He stepped into the darkness and experienced it himself what can you do what can you do what can you do Jesus asks one thing to this man at the end do you believe in the Son of Man do you believe that the God of Heaven who you can never reach came down and was born to suffer so that you would see that's what Jesus is asking He calls himself the Son of Man do you believe that the blind man gives the right response Lord, I believe and He worshiped him Jesus needs to be the object of your faith if you're going to have life as it's meant to be if you're going to see life as it's meant to be we're going to sing in a minute I think we've sung it before but it's all about Jesus' life from his birth to his death and it says this about him on the cross he fights for breath, he fights for me losing sinners from the claims of hell and with a shout, our souls are free death defeated by Emmanuel our souls are freed we see life as it is meant to be when we say with the blind man, I believe just to end one more thing to know in this chapter each time the blind man speaks to Jesus he gives him a different title so in verse 11 he's getting asked about Jesus and he calls him a man then in verse 17 they ask why he thinks about Jesus and he calls him a prophet and in verse 35 when he's speaking to Jesus he calls him sir and then finally he can say nothing but Lord he calls him Lord and when he moves from man to prophet to sir to lord these titles are becoming more and more reverent more and more honourable it seems that his insight into who Jesus is is growing and growing and growing his affection for Jesus is growing in these moments and at the same time the Pharisees become more and more stuck in their unbelief they go from questioning Jesus and disagreeing with each other to finally telling this blind man he's completely wrong and they throw him out

[28 : 31] Jesus came to give sight to the blind that's divisive in this story and it's divisive tonight do you believe and if you do is your affection growing like the blind man moving from man to prophet to sir to lord are you approaching Christmas with a growing love for Jesus are you approaching Christmas with a growing love for the one who stepped into the darkness who rose again and who now intercedes and prays for you every day for your sight to grow let's pray Lord we thank you for the story of you healing this man born blind and Lord we pray that in our own hearts tonight we would reckon with ourselves do we believe that the son of God came and was born to give us sight and if we do believe that is our love, is our affection growing more and more we pray that it will and we ask these things in Jesus' name

Amen