

Lecture 9 - John 9:1-41

There was a popular song released some time ago entitled “Two Different Worlds.” It’s true not only in the romantic life, (women are from Venus/men are from Mars) it’s true in the physical life. We live in two different worlds on this earth. There is a world of sounds that our silent friends never hear. There is a world of physical activity that our crippled friends never enter into. And there is a world of sight that our blind friends never see. It’s encouraging to know that many handle physical handicap with a wonderfully positive attitude. They aren’t seeking pity . . . they’re seeking our acceptance. Like songwriter Fanny Crosby who was blind since childhood and lived to be ninety-five. She wrote this poem at age eight titled “Blind but Happy”:

O what a happy soul am I!/ Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world/ Contented I will be;
How many blessings I enjoy/ That other people don’t!
To weep and sigh because I’m blind/ I cannot, and I won’t.
Have you ever thought about living without sight?

The man in John, chapter 9, never knew what it was to see his mother’s face or a marvel at a sunset in the evening. His world was one of sound, and smell, and touch until one day there came along Someone who changed all that.

Today we'd call his a case of congenital blindness. This is the only time in all the gospels where someone born with an affliction is healed from it. So it's a unique account. As we look at this chapter, I want to address:

1) the case 2) the cure 3) the confession and 4) the consequences.

The case is brought to our attention on a Sabbath day in October about 29 A.D. at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Jesus had slipped away from the temple grounds as the Jews picked up stones to stone him. As He went along with His disciples, He saw a man blind from birth. That in itself is not what's remarkable, but the interest that arose from various groups who became aware of this encounter is what draws our attention.

To the disciples the man was the subject for theological analysis. They asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" They seemed bewildered by the seeming irrationality of an affliction that could not be traced to a definite judgment of retribution on sin. This abstract problem of blame occupied them more than ministering to the individual that had aroused the question.

To the neighbors the man was characterized as a beggar. He was dependent on their generosity and, I imagine, was regarded as more or less of a nuisance. He was unproductive, contributing nothing to the life of the community, and was one more mouth to feed. The neighbors were not unkind, but indifferent.

To the Pharisees this man was only a tool. Since the healing was performed on a Sabbath, he would be useful in incriminating Jesus whom they wanted to trap. When he wouldn't go along with their purposes, they contemptuously cast him off and excommunicated him.

In contrast to these three attitudes – ☒he's a sinner, ☒he's not worth much to society, ☒he's of no use to me – (attitudes which, by the way, still exist today toward the needy of our society) Jesus viewed him as “a man – a person.” Jesus felt that the man's condition called for action rather than discussion.

So here was a case of a man who needed physical sight and an opportunity for Jesus to confirm the fact of what He'd stated in chapter 8 that “I am the light of the world” by also giving this man spiritual sight.

I don't want to sidestep the issue of the disciples' question. When Jesus said that neither the man nor his parents sinned, He was not saying that they were sinless people. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 8:23) The prevalent thinking of the times was not so much different from what some think today . . . why has this terrible thing happened? What have I done (they done) to deserve this? There has to be some reason that fits into our logic.

They recognized that sin has consequences and someone should bear the blame. It can be easy to blame God in anger, but God doesn't make mistakes. Sometimes in human tragedy no one is specifically at fault, but the experiences of disease, sorrow, suffering, limitations, and

handicap are the effects of man's separation from God. Other times it is simply God's will. You might want to write in the margin of your Bible the cross-reference of Exodus 4:10-11. In that passage Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." The Lord said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" Exodus 4:10-11 affirms the fact that in many cases God does take full responsibility. It is no mistake. It is no miserable circumstance when viewed from God's perspective. It can simply be God's will and God says, "The man's blindness is for the purpose of displaying My work." It's a major step of Christian maturity to understand that God doesn't have to explain Himself to us.

Jesus seized the opportunity at hand to heal the blind man reminding us that night is coming when no one can work.

I was reminded this week of something I'd read awhile ago . . . a quote by Brian Dyson, CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises. It reads: "Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends, and spiritual matters, and you're keeping all these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends, and spiritual matters – are made of glass. If you drop any one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed,

marked, nicked, damaged, or even shattered. They will never be the same. Understand that, and strive for balance in your life. “Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift. That’s why we call it . . . the present.”

How many present opportunities to do what’s right and good do we pass up each day? Planting must be done in seedtime, tending the field must be done in growing time, harvesting must be done when the crop is ripe. We must teach the children while they’re young, we must show love while the loved one is still with us, we must prepare for the future while it is still today. Make the most of every opportunity!

Well, the cure . . . Why did Jesus put clay on the man’s eyes? I know Dennis suggested that perhaps the man had no eyeballs and Jesus created them. He certainly could have done that. However, some explain the method Jesus used as a concession to current Jewish belief that spittle possessed magical curative powers. Maybe it made the blind man a little more willing to go wash . . . to put feet on his faith. Why Jesus didn’t go with the man to the pool, we’re never told. Why the man wasn’t allowed to wash it off there in front of the Lord, we don’t know. All we know is that the Lord Jesus gave specific instructions, just like your coming to know Christ. God says, “If you want to know what it is to have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, His plan is very simple. Confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead and you will be saved. For it is with your heart

that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” (Romans 10:9) That’s His plan.

So Jesus told the man in similar terms, . . . “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” He didn’t react like reluctant Namaan who objected to washing in Jordan seven times to cure his leprosy as we read in 2 Kings 5:1-14. Instead, he obeyed and went away and washed, and came back seeing. Scripture says that “Siloam” means “sent.” During the reign of King Hezekiah, the water source for Jerusalem was outside the city wall, which meant they were very vulnerable at any time of siege. So the king ordered a conduit to be dug underground from the spring to the center of the city. The workmen began at opposite points and started digging toward each other through solid rock. The distance was 583 yards (nearly six football fields in length), and they met in the center perfectly in line with each other. So the reason the pool was called “Siloam” was that the water was sent through the conduit to the city. To put a spiritual application on it, it’s easy to see that if you go in obedience to the sent one (Jesus Christ), you are washed clean and given spiritual sight.

Now, I think it is justifiable to say at this point that the man did not quietly respond after seeing, “My, isn’t this nice.” I have a feeling that when he saw for the first time he shouted for joy! He probably couldn’t contain himself! When it says, “He came back seeing,” I want you to enter into that experience. For the first time he saw his own hands. He saw his own body, his own face. He saw what clay looks like, what

water looks like, what people look like. He saw the trees and the clouds and the sky. He looked around and he saw a world in panorama. So he made his way back and looked for the first time at faces who now matched voices he'd been familiar with. They're called his neighbors, verse 8.

So we come to the confession . . . Each time the healed man recounted what had happened, he did so in simple and direct language. ✓He had been blind; ✓a man called Jesus anointed his eyes with clay and commanded him to wash in Siloam; ✓he washed; ✓he returned seeing. The statement dealt with facts, not just theories. It was first-hand knowledge.

The neighbors, motivated by curiosity, were eager to learn more about what happened. Did they enter into his joy? No! There was general disbelief and discussion and wanting to know where was the man who healed him. "I don't know," he said.

It was common when someone was healed, especially from some infirmity that would keep them from the temple, that they'd be taken to the Pharisees to affirm the healing/cleansing.

So this man came before the Pharisees with, no doubt, a grin from ear to ear. He was still elated. But he didn't know what he was in for. You see, he had been a beggar. And Pharisees didn't have time for beggars. But that makes it neat, because he had nothing to lose with the Pharisees. Everybody else lived under the gun of being

excommunicated. He didn't care, you know. He was rejoicing over his new sight. So The Pharisees, whose motive was to create controversy, could only focus not on the miracle, but only on the fact that the Sabbath law that had been broken. They had very strict rules about that.

Pressure was applied, and the healed man took a new step of faith and declared of Jesus, "He is a prophet." A heated argument ensued. The man's parents were called in and, being fearful of the Pharisees, said, "He's of age, let him speak for himself." Fear of taking a stand is a common occurrence for all of us. We know there'll be consequences. So that may not justify those parents in shirking their duty, but we can at least understand their fear.

Now here the Holy Spirit graciously gives this man the ability to stand up strong. Notice how he does it, verse 24. The parents have put it back on him. They said, "He is of age, ask him." So the Pharisees come the second time to the man and they say, . . . "Give glory to God; we know this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Facts are more stubborn than unsupportable opinions.

Do you know what a syllogism is? It presents a premise and draws a conclusion. There must be no flaw in the logic in deriving that conclusion. The problem lies in whether the truth of the premise is accurate or not. For example:

Major premise: All people who are from God keep the Sabbath.

Minor premise: This man Jesus does not keep the Sabbath.

Conclusion: This man Jesus is not from God.

There's another:

Major premise: Only the wicked suffer physical affliction.

Minor premise: This man suffers physical affliction.

Conclusion: This man is wicked.

It may have worked for the Pharisees as they argued . . . but it was not based on the truth. So the Pharisees had their backs crowded to the wall. They couldn't shake his testimony or the obvious facts.

Now we come to the consequences . . . this man was cast out, verse 34. "They put him out." Well, you'd expect that. That's the ultimate thing they could do. They had no answer, so they put him out. It's like an illustration I read of a missionary who showed this group of people that the river where they were drawing their water was causing the infection in the community. And he showed them in the microscope the germs to help explain to them that the river was the source of the problem. That night they tore up his microscope. That was their way of saying, "That'll get rid of the problem." That answers nothing. It just removes the evidence.

That's what these men did. "We don't have an answer, so we'll put him out. It's interesting that Pharisees usually resort to forcing you out when they run out of answers. Have you found that true even today?

Now he left, but I love what Chrysostom says, “The Jews cast him out of the temple, and the Lord of the temple found him.” Isn’t that good? The Lord wasn’t in that temple. He was outside. He had been cast out a long time ago.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd we’ll study in chapter 10, cares not only for the body but for the soul of the man he rescued. He was moved with pity and sought out the man. Remember the man recognizes the voice of Jesus – he hadn’t yet seen his face. Pointedly Jesus asked, “You there, do you believe in the Son of Man?” The reply, “Who is he, Lord?” And Jesus revealed himself. Immediately he responded with an act of worship which is the final state of belief.

That’s real Christianity – no building, no church, in fact, no man-made legislation. Have you learned that true worship isn’t connected with a building? It can be, but you could worship behind the wheel of a car. You could worship at your desk. You can worship in the kitchen. You can worship with friends in a home. Worship is loving and adoring the Lord Jesus Christ anywhere!

Did you see the progress in the man’s thoughts? He first said, verse 11, “He’s Jesus who made clay.” In verse 17, “He’s the prophet.” And then verse 38, “My Lord,” and he worshipped Him. He had come to know Christ, didn’t He? Not only was he given sight physically, but he was given sight spiritually. What a day in that man’s life!

Once more Jesus had words for the Pharisees. They were the blind men bluffing, and the man with sight had nothing to hide. And Jesus came back with a devastating remark to them. “Because you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains. You’re not even willing to acknowledge that you’re blind.”

I guess that brings us down to where the rubber meets the road, doesn’t it. Can you or I be spiritually blind and not know of our infirmity? If you’re caught in the trap of legalism, the answer is yes. If Scripture is read but not applied to you personally, the answer is yes. If attitudes keep you isolated within the body of Christ, the answer is yes. Spiritual blindness narrows, restricts, and darkens the soul. Like a man born blind who does not know what he’s missing, many have the added misfortune of being comparatively happy in their ignorance.

Once I was blind . . . to my own sinfulness, to my purpose in life, to the needs of others, to the degeneracy of this generation.

But now I see . . . my Savior, Jesus Christ, opened my eyes to my sinfulness and His sacrifice on the cross to purchase my salvation and right standing before a holy God. My purpose in life is to serve Him and bring glory to my God. The Holy Spirit has given me eyes to see beyond faces and into hearts that need my encouragement, or my time, or my resources. What I’ve learned through Bible study over the years has given me an awareness and spiritual insight into the desperate need

my neighbors, and the world, has for Jesus Christ if there is ever to be a standard of righteousness in our everyday life.

Truly, I was blind . . . but now I see. It is the truth and the truth has set me free.

Let's pray.