

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind **John 9:1-40**

Thanks for the opportunity to open the word with you this morning. We have been on a journey together, looking at the life of Jesus through the book of John. As we have looked through this book together, we've seen Jesus do some amazing things. Remember that the reason John wrote his gospel was so that we might believe Jesus is who he says he is – that he is the Christ, the son of God, and that through him, we might be able to live life to its fullest. That's really why we're studying this book together – if we got together for coffee and I sat across from you at the table and I asked you, "Do you want to live your life to its fullest?" My guess is that you would answer yes – that you would tell me that's worth pursuing.

For the last few weeks, we've been exploring these conversations that Jesus has had with the Pharisees, the religious leaders who believed that God was on their side because they were right. We've talked about how they made idols out of their ancestry and out of their traditions, and in today's story, we're going to see how they made an idol out of their theology.

Today we'll be in John chapter 9, and we're going to take a look at the whole chapter today. It's a great story of not just of Jesus healing physical blindness, but also spiritual blindness – and it also cautions us that people actually do choose to live in the darkness, so in that way it's also a warning to us. There's a lot going on in this event, but there are 3 key types of people in this story that we can identify with: the hurting, the skeptics, and the followers.

It starts in John 9 at verse one. As your making your way there in your Bible, I want to encourage you to read through this section of scripture a few times this week. We're going to go through it pretty quickly this morning, but I think it would be a really good thing for this to be the beginning of the conversation about John 9 – that you go home, sort through it some more this week, and talk about it with your friends and family.

John 9, starting at verse 1: "*As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.*" Let's stop here for a minute and put ourselves in this man's shoes. He's been blind from birth. He's never seen a sunset or a sunrise. Never saw his mom's face before. If you might do this activity with me – just for a few seconds. Close your eyes. What you're experiencing right now is what this man lived his entire life. Not only can he not see, but the culture this man

finds himself in basically has ostracized him. So not only can he not see, he is alone. He can't get married or have kids or provide for a family. Go ahead and open your eyes back up. Because he's been shunned by his community, this man is uneducated and can't work for himself. So, there's no way he can compensate for his disability. So, he has to beg for money; he's living this humiliating life.

Verse 2: And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus is walking through town; the Bible says that, everywhere Jesus went, there was a crowd. There are people lined up. As he's walking out of the temple courtyard, Jesus stops and sees this blind beggar, and He stops the whole parade, the whole processional. He looks at this blind guy. During that time that they stopped and Jesus is just kind of looking at him, the disciples say, "Was he born blind because of his sin or his parents' sin?" Not very helpful, right? That's not really a helpful question. Imagine you're the blind man, you're blind, but not deaf. You can hear the question asked.

During that time, there was a tradition, a teaching, that went like this in Jewish culture: if you had any type of deformity, you had a short arm or a limp or blindness or whatever- that it was a punishment for your sin or your parents' sin. So they give two options. How many of you don't like either of those two options? Is he bad or is his family bad?

The question itself is a deeper question – the question really is why do we suffer? But they framed the question wrong. They asked the wrong question, and so in their mind, there were only two options.

Verse 3: "Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Jesus responds and says, that's not the issue here, you guys missed the point. He's blind because he has the opportunity to glorify God in a unique way. Is this man a sinner, sure – but he's not being punished for his own direct sin. Think about that – think about what they are suggesting: a man born blind committed some atrocious sin in the womb that he's being punished for. What?

The question of why do we suffer – there are two general ideas that you see here, and they are the same two we wrestle with as well: Karma vs. Kingdom. The crowd sees this man’s plight from a Karmic perspective. Jesus redirects it to a Kingdom perspective.

What do I mean by Karma? Karma is the idea that if you do good you get good, and that if you do bad, you get bad. Also, the philosophy of Karma says that you shouldn’t help those who are suffering because if they are suffering it means that they are a bad person or they come from a bad family, and so this suffering that they are enduring is their way to pay back this Karmic debt and balance themselves back out.

We’ve done this too, right? Something bad happens to someone, and we think, “I wonder what they did to deserve that?”

Jesus gives the crowd following him a kingdom perspective. He says, the issue isn’t about causation. It’s not about sin, it’s about suffering. There’s a major difference here. From a kingdom perspective, there are a number of reasons why suffering exists:

1. It could be personal sin. Some of us in here have rough pasts, and the suffering we’re dealing with is a natural result of the bad choices we made in the past. We were foolish with our money in the past and now we’re struggling financially. We ate too much last night and now we feel sick this morning. Jesus says this isn’t the case with this man.
2. Sometimes it’s family sin. Sometimes we have to deal with the ramifications of the poor choices of those closest to us. Maybe in this case that we’re looking at his mom did drugs and that left him blind. But Jesus says that’s not the case either.
3. The third choice here is that we live in a broken, fallen world, and nothing is the way it’s supposed to be. Sin has infected every part of this world, including our lives, and as a result of Adam and Eve, we have to deal with the consequences.
4. Sometimes it’s a result of spiritual warfare. Sometimes people suffer because they are following Christ. They are godly and are suffering, not because they are ungodly, but because they are living rightly. Job is a perfect example of this. Job was a godly man, living righteously, and yet he suffered a ton. He lost his family, his wealth, and his health. If you’ve read that story before, what do Job’s friends and his wife do in the midst of his suffering? They assume that Job has committed some sin and they say to him, “c’mon Job, just confess your sin to

God and things will go better for you.” Unhelpful. But it’s the same thing that these guys said to Jesus.

5. Sometimes suffering comes as a result of what others have done to us; we are victims of injustice and we suffer because of it. It’s not our fault, but we still have to deal with it.

Here’s the truth about suffering: ultimately, there’s mystery to it. A lot of times, we just can’t ever be sure. I don’t think we can ever have all the answers. And that’s what Jesus is driving at here. He says, “guys, you’ve missed the point. The point isn’t who sinned.” It’s not a question of Karma, it’s a question of Grace. Is this a bad man? No, he’s a broken man. The issue isn’t sin, it’s suffering. There are many people in this world who are broken, and they need healing and restoration.

Jesus is essentially saying, you’ve asked the wrong question. The question isn’t “why”. We do this too, don’t we? Why did my kid walk away from the faith? Why did I lose my job? I try to live right, why is it that I’m the one who’s sick? Why do I have to struggle to make ends meet all the time? Why do the friends I have betray me? Why?

Jesus says he’s not bad, he’s just broken, and so you’ve asked the wrong question. He says, it’s not the “why” it’s the “how”. *“but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”* This statement should challenge us too. Many of us in here are suffering in one way or another. We can ask why, or we can ask how can God use my suffering to advance his kingdom? How can my story help my brothers and sisters in Christ? Instead of wasting my suffering, how can I see this as a unique opportunity to invest this in others? How is God teaching me to follow him more closely while I endure this suffering? How can I be an example to others in faithfulness? What if God chooses to use this to bring nonbelievers to himself?

See, Jesus not only wants to heal physically, but he wants to straighten out our theology and help us to think kingdom thoughts.

“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 ⁷ and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.” I think this is

funny. Of all the ways that Jesus could heal this guy, this is how He chooses to do it. Can we all agree that God works in some ways that are just weird to us sometimes? In ways we don't expect? He's talking to this guy, then He spits on the ground, and He takes the saliva and makes this mud pie. The Bible doesn't say "mud pie" – that's my loose translation. He makes the mud pie and puts it on his eyes, and then tells him to go find the pool of Siloam.

I wonder how this blind guy felt. Probably pretty foolish. He can hear Jesus spit on the ground, and you know that people are around watching this. He can almost feel their leers and maybe even hear some of them laughing in the background. Maybe he says to himself, "what do I have to lose", so he gets to the pool, and he begins to wash. Just imagine for a second that light now begins to pour into his eyes. Something he'd never experienced ever before – he could see light. Then, all of a sudden, he begins to see a reflection of a person he had never seen in his entire life. He looks up and sees the sky. He's now beginning to get all these colors and these shapes and these people and these images.

Then the Bible says, verse 8 -- ⁸ *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?"* ⁹ *Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."* ¹⁰ *So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"* ¹¹ *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."* ¹² *They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."*

Where do you start, when you stop asking the why question and start asking the what question? It simply begins with you telling your story. You share what God has done in your life. That's what the ex-blind man did. He goes to the people that knew him, he seeks out his friends and family and he says, I was the guy, I was blind. You saw me here, begging for my entire life. I was that guy, but look what Jesus did for me!

But some of them didn't believe what he had to say." Can you imagine that? The people who knew him want this full report from the man, but he's kind of like, well, I was blind before, so I really couldn't see anything before this. I mean, the dude put mud in my eyes and I didn't see that one coming, So...?

Then it says in verse 13, *"They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind."* ¹⁴ *Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.* ¹⁵ *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." ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man (talking about Jesus) 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. ¹⁷ 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."

We've been talking a lot lately about Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees. Last week we left Jesus leaving the temple because the Pharisees were gathering stones to stone Jesus to death because Jesus claimed to be God. Again, this miracle really is a word picture to follow that interaction. There's a clear difference between light and dark, between those who follow God and who follow Satan, between those who are blind and those who can see. The pharisees are so trapped in their blindness that they are choosing to remain blind rather than see the truth.

How do we know this? Because, back in the Old Testament, in Isaiah chapter 61, it talks about the appearance of the Messiah, the chosen one, the Christ, the savior, and when he comes, he would give sight to the blind. The pharisees would have known this. They would know that the King of kings is here on earth and he's beginning to usher in his kingdom when the blind are given back their sight.

Do you know how many people were healed of their blindness from birth in the Old Testament? Zero. None. The pharisees should have been able to look at this unique moment and said, could this be? But they're skeptical. They choose spiritual blindness instead of spiritual sight.

The ex-blind man shows us a picture of the way the Christian life really works. We have faith in Christ, we obey, and we see. The Pharisees believe they're the only ones that can truly see. What do they do instead? They cling to their rules and traditions and their understanding of the Sabbath. They can't distinguish between their rules and God's laws. So the Pharisees are angry with Jesus because he disobeyed their Sabbath rules for work.

Maybe you're asking? "How did Jesus work on the Sabbath? All He did was heal a guy." I'm glad you asked, here goes: the pharisees said that you can't look in a mirror on the sabbath because that might tempt you to pluck a gray hair, which would reaping. Jesus

told the blind man to wash in the pool and he saw his reflection in the water. You couldn't walk over a certain number of steps on the sabbath, and Jesus told his man to walk to the Pool of Siloam, violating their rules. He spat on the ground and He made mud. That was considered work. The pharisees said you could spit on a rock, but not on the ground, and you definitely can't make mud. That's work. And you definitely can't heal on the sabbath. That's how legalistic the Pharisees were, that He worked on a Sabbath. The only time that you could actually work on a Sabbath was to save somebody's life – not to heal someone.

These Pharisees were choosing to remain in their blindness and using their rules as a barrier to challenge their faith. How do I know? They were actually less than excited that this guy was healed. All they're after is trying to get at Jesus. So they're not even interested in getting after the truth, just like we looked at last week. The religious leaders have a problem because they hold their rules to be higher than God's laws. Jesus explained this to them in our passage from last week, and they didn't get it, so he's going to show them. Basically Jesus is picking a fight.

Sometimes Jesus, in his holiness, offends us in order for us to see clearly. Sometimes Jesus needs to fix our theology – sometimes we have a position or a perspective on God that needs to change – and sometimes we have to be offended for that position to change. Sometimes God works in ways that we don't understand or ways where we are scratching our heads, saying "God, I don't think I would have done it that way, do you really know what you're doing," and God says, "Yes, I've got this under control, I know what I'm doing. You just have to trust me." So this smoke screen of rules that the Pharisees are hiding behind means that they don't know God and they don't trust him.

Then it says this: *The Jews^[a]* (John is talking about the Pharisees and religious leaders, not all Jewish people) *did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight,* How's that for a narrative? How's that for an explanation? No, you weren't blind – you were faking it. Sometimes spiritual blindness is just absurd, right? Sometimes spiritual blindness is just stupid, isn't it? Can't you just feel the set up happening here?

They did not believe he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹ 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.” ²² (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus^[b] to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³ Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.” So here’s this guy who’s been healed, telling his story, and instead of saying, “hey get his parents! We need to throw a party! He was blind and Jesus healed him! God’s at work!” they go, “No, we don’t believe you because that would mean that Jesus is something special. We don’t believe you because that would mean that Jesus is God. Let’s get your parents.” So they call the parents in.

They say, yeah, that’s our son, but we don’t know how it happened. Ask him about it, he’s old enough. Here’s why they said this. They said this because they were afraid that the Jewish leaders had announced that anyone saying that Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. That’s why they said, “He’s old enough to speak for himself; ask him.” The synagogue during this time was the center of Jewish life. If you were part of the Jewish synagogue, you were in. You could have your needs met. But if you were expelled from the synagogue, you were nothing. These parents, they didn’t want to suffer this isolation, so they said, “You’d better ask him yourself.”

So they call this guy back in a second time. The second time, they call the man in who had been blind and told him, “*Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.*” Listen: it’s okay to be skeptical. It’s okay to ask questions. A skeptic goes after answers. But when you let your skepticism cause unbelief, you’ve already made up your mind. Here they are, with their minds made up saying, “We know Jesus is a sinner.”

Here’s what the guy said, He answered, “*Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.*”

As a Christian, you don’t have to have all of the answers for everybody. You and I have a story of how God has worked in our lives. We start there.

I’ve told some of you this before, but I don’t have one of those amazing testimonies, you know, the ones that are like, “ones like, “I used to do drugs when I was an infant. When I was five, I was the biggest drug smuggler in the kindergarten. When I was seven, I stabbed my mom. When I was ten, I drove the car over my grandma. But when I was

twelve, somebody brought me to church and I became a Christian." That's not my story. I've never known a time in my life where I didn't know Jesus. So, my story is about God's faithfulness to me in spite of myself.

A lot of times, we get so concerned that we don't have all the right answers and we aren't going to be able to answer everybody's questions and so it's going to seem like we have a weak faith. Share your story and tell them that you'll look into their questions with them.

Verse 26: *"They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"* ²⁷ *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?"* I love this response. I have the spiritual gift of sarcasm, so to me, this is the best answer ever. He says, I've already told you once. I used to be blind a few hours ago, but now I can see and you want to know who healed me. You skeptics, you're the blind ones. I'm not blind any more. Why do you keep asking these questions? Do you want to become a follower of Jesus too?" They were anything but. If you think reading the bible is boring, you're reading the wrong bible.

The story continues, *"And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.* ²⁹ *We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."* It's the same song, second verse from last week. Here's what they were saying: We are superior because we are from Moses, and Jesus isn't from anywhere. But if they really followed Moses, they would follow Jesus – because that's who Moses points to in the Old Testament.

Verse 30:³⁰ *The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.* Like, you religious people are supposed to be so close to God. He healed me, and you don't know anything about Him.

³¹ *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.* ³² *Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.* ³³ *If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."* This never happened before, Jesus shows up, and I can see you now. How do you explain that Pharisees?"

³⁴ They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. The pharisees don't even answer his questions. They just bad mouth his family and tell him that he's an idiot.

Here's the summary of the story: Jesus brings healing to the hurting, Jesus has answers for the skeptics, and Jesus proves His power to His followers.

So what? Of those three types of people, where are you? How would you identify yourself? Is there one of those three that you might say, "That describes me"?

Are you hurting? Maybe you're not blind, but you need some healing. Maybe you're saying my kids walked away from the faith, my family rejected me, my spouse rejected me, I'm constantly struggling financially, maybe it is physical. You can't shake your addictions. Or you've made bad decisions in life. Whatever it is.

What I love about Jesus is that he says, "You know what, I'll find you. I'm going to come find you." Jesus is looking for you. Look at verse 35: ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"^[E] ³⁶ He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." ³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him." If you're hurting, respond to Jesus in faith. That's what the blind man did. He trusted Jesus to heal him. Jesus is asking you to trust him through the pain. In your hurting you can cling to your plans and your own expectations of how things are supposed to go, or you can cling to Jesus, who has a plan for your pain, and trust him to work it out in whatever weird way he chooses to.

Maybe you're a skeptic. There are a lot of people in life who think they can see but they're spiritually blind. There are a lot of skeptics who think they know the right way, but they are wandering off track. The thing about a blind person is that they know they are blind. A blind person knows their condition. The Pharisees thought they could see because they thought they knew the truth. And when they were confronted with the truth, they rejected it because they thought they knew better.

Verse 39: Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these

things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt;^[d] but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

Recognize that you have blind spots. We all do. The question isn't who is blind and who isn't blind. The question is who is blind and acknowledges it and who is blind and denies it. The pharisees weren't willing to recognize they had blind spots even when God in the flesh pointed them out.

Recognize that you have blind spots. Ask questions. Invite people into your life who love you enough to speak truth to you, and when they do, really listen to them...because you trust that they love you.

If you're like the blind man at the end of the story, and you can say, "Lord I believe." You're a follower of Jesus, live your life in the way the ex-blind man did at the end of the story. He worshipped Jesus. In the Greek, that word for worship, in this context means to bow before the king and subjugate yourself at the feet of the king and kiss his feet. Now, catch this: did Jesus demand this of the blind man? No. The man doesn't do this out of fear, he does it out of faith. He recognizes that he has done nothing to deserve that is now a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, and in response he loves Jesus. If you're a follower, you're entire life is a testimony to change that Jesus has made in you...and just like the blind man, share your story.

One of the things I've learned over the years is that you have to earn the right to be heard. If you don't live your life in a way that reflect the love, awe, adoration, and worship of Jesus, how in world can you expect someone else to want that?

Let's close with this: the blind man is a great example of life change. He acknowledged his blindness. He didn't argue with Jesus' plan to change his life. He submitted himself to Jesus through obedience. Jesus changed his life.

Prayer: God, we want to worship You with our lives. I know there are some people here today who are just hurting so badly they don't know how to worship You because all they're thinking about is their pain. I pray that You would meet them like You met the blind man and heal them of their hurt. And, God, I pray for those who are skeptics, who've got so many questions. I pray that You would, in the way that only You can, provide them answers through other people, through Your word, through their study and their sincere investigation. Help us to recognize our blind spots. God, I know there are followers here

today who know You and have relationship with You. Thank you for changing our lives – and may our lives be defined by worship, because we love you and we trust you. God, as we come to take communion this morning, may we remember that you stepped into our brokenness for us and took it on yourself on our behalf. Just like the blind beggar, our hearts are open and lifted up to you to receive what you have given. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Let's apply John 9:1-41:

- While we all have blind spots, Jesus brings healing to the hurting, has answers for the skeptics, and proves His power to His followers. In which category(s) do you tend to live, and who have you found that loves you enough to listen and speak truth into your life?
- Theology (the study of God) can be tricky, and it can quickly devolve into idolatry. One extreme is relativism (disregarding universal biblical principles). Another extreme is fundamentalism (confusing expressions of faith with absolutes). What universal principles do you struggle with? What personal rules or preferences do you tend to confuse with God's absolute truth/laws?
- When suffering comes, why might people choose a "karmic perspective" (What did I/they do wrong?) over a "kingdom perspective"? Why is it most advantageous to keep the focus on grace rather than sin?
- How has God worked in your life through a weird, unexpected, or even unwanted way? How does it make you feel to talk about it, and why must such stories be shared no matter how strange they sound, and even if we don't have all the answers?