

“On the Road to the Cross: Truly Seeing Jesus”

John 9:1-41

3/15/2026

(Show Title Slide)

We are now on the road with Jesus

As Jesus heads to his death on the cross

(Show Thief River Falls UMC Slide)

39 years ago,

as I was in first year of serving as a pastor in Minnesota,

This scripture reading was on the preaching schedule

Since I was the Associate Pastor at Thief River Falls UMC,

the only time I had in my weekly schedule to write a sermon

was on Saturdays

But that Saturday, one of church members was in the local hospital

And I spent most of the day with this member and their family

And didn't have any time left that day to write my sermon

But I was a new, young pastor, seminary educated,

And I knew everything

No Problem

(Show Thief River Falls Sanctuary Slide)

I'd just wing the sermon

Because I knew everything that this reading was all about.

There was one problem.

The sermon clocked in at 45 minutes

At the end of the service, as everyone shook my hand

At the end of the aisle by the door

The prevailing message that I was told was

Great sermon – I learned a lot

And, you can do that once (only once)

(Show baptism Slide)

Remember when we talked about a month and a half ago

About how to guarantee a really short sermon?

It's when we schedule a baptism on a Sunday

When we also have Holy Communion

And toss in the longest scripture of our three-year lectionary cycle

For good measure

So, if you want short sermons around here,

We need lots of baptisms!

Go and get all the families you know

who have unbaptized children

and let's get them all scheduled in!

Of course we know that short sermons are not why we baptize

The actual reason for and results of baptism

are much more important and longer lasting than a short sermon

They are eternal

Having an everlasting, abundant life with Jesus

But before I end today's sermon,

I have two important points I need to share

(Show Blind Bartimaeus - Brian Jekel Slide)

² Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?"

– John 9:2

Who sinned?

We need to know, Jesus!

We still ask questions like that today

- Why is someone sick?
- Why did that accident happen?
- How come does a family live in poverty?

The list of these questions goes on and on

But the underlying query is what did they do that was wrong

Who sinned?

And what about a sweet little baby who was born blind?

Was the baby a sinner in the womb?

Or was it the parents?

We need to know, Jesus!

So, does Jesus answer this pressing theological question?
Or does Jesus lovingly heal the man who was born blind?

³ *Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents..."*

(Show Jesus Holding Blind Man Slide)

⁶ *After he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man's eyes.*

– John 9:3a, 6

When there is misfortune and hardship in the world around us
Illness and cancer and people dying
Accidents and disasters
and families who are hungry or without a place to live
it is not up to us to assign blame
We are called by Jesus to help pick up the pieces **with** them
And to love and heal people
who are in need of loving and healing

In terrible situations,
Who will be the ones to love and heal?

And one more thing...

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As the story continues,
The man born blind sees more and more clearly
Both physically and spiritually
And the Pharisees and Jewish authorities
Become more and more intolerant and narrow-minded and blind

³⁹ *Jesus said, "I have come into the world to exercise judgment so that those who don't see can see and those who see will become blind."*

⁴⁰ *Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, "Surely we aren't blind, are we?"*

⁴¹ *Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you wouldn't have any sin, but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.*

– John 9:39-41

You and I have the potential capacity of becoming blind
It's when we refuse to notice or see the places

Where God's love and mercy and grace and healing
are called for

For whatever reason we blind to these places and things.

If we don't see what God is calling for us to see
Surely we are blind

(Show Jesus Holding Blind Man Slide)

So, what hope do we have to avoid this blindness?
To, instead of assigning blame,
to love and heal?

If we can see people and the world as Jesus sees,
That will guide us on what we need to do

Let's you and me, let us turn our gaze toward Jesus...

(Response Hymn "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus"

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