

**John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39** As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” <sup>3</sup> “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” <sup>6</sup> After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. <sup>7</sup> “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. . . . They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. <sup>15</sup> Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.” <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner perform such signs?” So they were divided. <sup>17</sup> Then they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.” . . . To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out. <sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” <sup>36</sup> “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” <sup>38</sup> Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

#### Jesus is the Light of the World

1. He sheds light on the purpose of suffering
2. He sheds light on his power at work for us
3. He sheds light that separates faith and unbelief

A few years ago, a movie came out called, “Ray.” It’s about the blind musician Ray Charles. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be blind? I don’t think any of us can fully understand what that is like. The actor who portrayed Ray Charles in the movie tried to get a feel for what it’s like. In preparation for the part, he would put on a blindfold shortly after he got up in the morning and kept it on until right before he went to bed. Even then, it’s not quite the same, is it?

In John 8, at the Festival of Tabernacles, Jesus announced, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12) When someone is the light of your life, what do you mean by that? That person fills you with joy and happiness. That person is the reason you get up in the morning. Jesus is the light of the world. What did he mean by that. This 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of John answers that for us.

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” <sup>3</sup> “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. If you haven’t spoken the actual words, you’ve probably thought them from time to time: “Why me?” From the depressed and exhausted Elijah to the distressed and childless Elizabeth, “Why me?” seemed like a reasonable question. From emergency rooms and intensive care units the same question still echoes, “Why me?”

How many people have been burdened with guilt, doubt, even despair. It’s true that death and disease and deformity – everything that is tragic in the world – are here because sin has spoiled God’s good creation. It’s true that sometimes children do suffer for the sins of their parents, that some diseases are the result of particular sins. It is also true, however, that most are not.

Mr. William Moon was blind. Because of his blindness, he developed a way for blind people to read with their fingers, similar to the Braille system we have today. Mr. Moon once said, “God gave me blindness as a talent to be used for his glory.” (Quoted by Richard Balge, The Northwestern Lutheran, March 1996, p. 3)

That is the reason this man was born blind: the glory of God. It was part of God’s will that this man be born blind. Although this man spent years in darkness, because of his blindness he came into contact with the Light of the world. This man experienced what Paul promised: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” <sup>36</sup> “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” <sup>38</sup> Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. Jesus not only wanted this man to have physical sight, but he went searching for him to give him spiritual sight as well. He wanted him not only to see, but also to believe.

Why are there sinners in the world? So that you and I can speak God’s word of forgiveness to them. Why are there heathen all over the earth? So that you and I can send missionaries to preach the good news to them. Why are there

unfortunate people in the world? So that you and I can do what needs to be done, to serve them in Jesus' name. (Balge) Jesus is the Light of the world who sheds light on the purpose of suffering and uses his power for us.

*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*"<sup>6</sup> After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.<sup>7</sup> "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. Can you imagine what that must have been like for that man? He could finally see what people looked like, what food looked like. Colors. The sky. Himself. Water. All these things he knew about, but could never see. Now, he could. Some things probably surprised him – how beautiful some things looked, that he had never seen before.

That's what Jesus gave this man and that's what Isaiah prophesied he would do. "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness . . . to open eyes that are blind." (Isaiah 42:6,7) Jesus used means, spit and dirt, to communicate to the man what he was doing. He could have just spoke the man's blindness away, but he wanted the man to know that his healing was no fluke or coincidence. He wanted the man to exercise faith by walking to the pool and washing, as Jesus commanded.

Do you see how this man's story is your story and my story? Did you know that you were born into this world spiritually blind. You couldn't see who Jesus Christ was. And when you can't see Jesus, you can't really see who God is. And when you can't see God, lots of things don't make sense in this world. Why am I here? What is my purpose in life? Where am I going? What will happen to me fifty or a hundred years from now, when I am not here? When you can't see Jesus, you can't see the answers to these questions. Maybe some of you can remember how that felt, to be wandering through life with the eyes of your soul glued shut.

But Jesus has opened your spiritual eyes just as he opened the physical eyes of this man in this lesson. And just like with this man he used means to do it. He used the gospel in the Word to open your eyes to see Jesus. He used the gospel in water and Word to make you see. When you washed, you were cleansed and came home seeing. Or consider Holy Communion. In this sacrament God uses a number of our senses to assure us of his presence and forgiveness. You can taste and see the bread and wine. Jesus' words assure us that in, with and under the bread you receive the body of Christ. That same body was given for you, and that same blood was shed for you on the cross. Through all these means, Jesus opens your eyes and keeps them opened focused on the cross and forgiveness of his sacrifice.

And so you can see how forgiving God is. You can see that he gave his own Son for you and takes away your sins. We were blind to that before, but now we can see and believe that God is wonderful, good, loving and full of grace.

And now Jesus wants to work through us. Jesus said, *As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.*<sup>5</sup> *While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*" The eternal night of hell when people can no longer hear the gospel message. They have no more opportunity to believe in Jesus and be saved. Now is the time. Today is the day. Let us do all we can while it is day to do that work God has given us to do. There are many who are trapped in spiritual blindness. Let's be God's instruments to open their eyes to see Jesus, the light of the world.

That light separates faith and unbelief. *They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.*<sup>14</sup> *Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.*<sup>15</sup> *Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."*<sup>16</sup> *Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."* But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" *"So they were divided.*<sup>17</sup> *Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."* The man replied, "He is a prophet." In 167 B.C. Antiochus' army put a stop to the Jew's sacrifices. The people of Jerusalem revolted and then fled to the desert. Their hiding place was soon discovered and they were attacked. Because the attack came on the Sabbath, the Jews refused to fight or run. Approximately 1000 men, women and children died without resistance because they considered the Sabbath sacred.

This helps us see the intense the conviction of devout Jews that the Sabbath not be broken. Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath. And that divided them.

This chapter exposes the real reason why people reject Jesus. It's not an intellectual problem. It's a moral problem. The weight of the evidence for Jesus was clear. This formally blind man could see it. The Pharisees chose to reject the evidence because it didn't conform to their idea of their standing with God.

There is enough evidence in Scripture to persuade anyone who is willing to listen to the truth, but many remain blind and won't listen. Thanks be to God that your eyes are open. Just as Jesus went looking for that healed man to bring him to faith, so he went after you. He planned your salvation in eternity and worked out your salvation in time. Then he used the means of his grace to open your eyes to his light. May we stay in the light. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8)