

Spiritually Blind

The Word Became Flesh

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: John 9:35-41

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Many people attribute the invention of modern eyeglasses to an Italian man named Salvino D Armadi during the 13th century. Contact lenses, on the other hand, that are made entirely of plastic like the ones that I am wearing today were developed by a chemist named Otto Wicterley in the 1950s. But the idea of contact lenses has been around since the early 1500s with a man you probably know called Leonardo da Vinci.

I can't tell you how happy I am that I live during this time period where we have things like glasses and contact lenses because without them, I am pretty much blind. Just a couple of weeks ago, I went to a doctor and got my eyes examined, and it had been a long time. And by a long time, I mean like 5 to 10 years. So it had been a while. Longer than that, my wife says. She always tells me I'm supposed to check my facts with her, but I'm just going to say 5 to 10 years, all right?

And so I go to get my eyes examined, and the doctor looks at me and he says, "Did you know you have extreme nearsightedness?" I said, "Of course I know. I have extreme nearsightedness." And my script for my contact lenses, if you guys know anything about scripts, is a minus 9. That's what my contacts are. So when you look at this chart and if somebody holds flowers in front of you, that's what I see, all right? So I circled what I actually see. Without my contacts or glasses, I actually would be legally blind.

Legally blind is minus 2.5 if you can't be corrected. Now, since I can be corrected, I'm not legally blind. But if I couldn't, then I would be more than four times the legal blindness, right, at negative nine. And so I'm very glad, of course, that I live in this time period. And if you know that I don't have my contacts or glasses in, you don't want me driving you anywhere, all right? Just know that. But with my contacts, it is amazing.

Again, we live in a world where with my contacts or glasses, my vision can almost be 20/20. Now, I have known people who are legally blind. They cannot get their eyes corrected by contacts or glasses. And it always amazes me how these people adapt. I am amazed at the way that God has created our bodies that when somebody is blind or maybe they are deaf and they can't hear, the other senses become enhanced. Does anybody else ever have any friends or anybody you knew that was blind or deaf?

And if they were blind, their sense of hearing was amazing. I mean, it was twice as good as my sense of hearing, and that's just the way that God has made us. Now, as interesting as all this is for some of you, some of you don't care at all. I don't want to spend this morning talking about physical blindness. I want to spend this morning talking about spiritual blindness because the consequences are much worse and there are many more people that suffer with it. So what is spiritual blindness?

Spiritual blindness is an internal condition. It's not a physical condition. This type of blindness occurs when we allow our focus to be on our own pride and our own desires. We suffer this type of blindness according to Scripture when we refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah and we believe we know more than God. That is spiritual blindness. And that truly is a scary place to be.

Now, you need to understand if you're watching online or listening on the radio, Jesus in Scripture never referred to a Gentile or a Seeker as somebody that could be spiritually blind. Instead, this title of spiritual blindness was always in connection with someone who was claiming to be religious but missed the point. This is a title that was reserved for those who claim to be religious, but somehow missed the point.

The broken and hurting do not suffer from this condition of spiritual blindness in the sense that it is used in Scripture. Instead, it is those who believe they have mastered the ways of God, but yet often found themselves dumbfounded by Jesus' ministry. And so as we are in John chapter 9, if you want to open your Bibles with me to John chapter 9, we are going to finish John chapter 9 today. We've been in it for three weeks. We've been in this series called The Word Became Flesh.

After today, we're going to take a break from this series, and we're going to jump into something else, and we'll get back into chapter 10 later on. But if you weren't here last week or you weren't watching or listening last week, in John chapter 9, we left off with the story where Jesus has just healed a man that was born blind. You remember he did it in a strange way. He spit on the ground and he made mud with the dirt.

He put it on the man's eyes, and he said, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam and you will be healed." And so the man goes to the pool, and he washes his eyes, and as soon as he opens his eyes, he can now see. Now, there's a problem that begins to develop because the Pharisees find out about this healing that has taken place or supposed healing to them. And it happened on the Sabbath. And so they have a problem with this because one of their man-made rules, apparently, was that you couldn't heal on the Sabbath, which doesn't make any sense to me because any day is a good day for healing, right?

They said, "No, not on the Sabbath. Can't heal on the Sabbath." So Jesus did it on the Sabbath. So they call this man who was formerly blind in, and they begin to interrogate him and say, "What happened and how did it happen?" And he explains the story to them. And they say, "Okay, we don't really believe you." And so they kick him out, and they bring in his parents and say, "Is this really your son?" Yep, that's our son. Was he really born blind? Yep, he was born blind. Well, how is it that he can see? Well, we don't know. He's of age. You can ask him because they're afraid of being kicked out of the synagogue, if you remember that.

And so the parents leave, and they call back in the man who was blind, and he tells them the story again, and they don't believe him. And so eventually, they kick him out of the synagogue. They say, "You know what? We don't believe you. You're proclaiming that this man did something great. We don't believe it. You're continuing to give credit to Jesus." And so they kick him out of the synagogue, and they continue their fruitless endeavor or search for a way to trap Jesus and get rid of Him.

And so we'll pick up in John chapter 9, verse 35, but let me pray before we read the text. Heavenly Father, my prayer is that our spiritual eyes would be opened today. That we would experience You, that we would see You, that we would take another step closer to You. Please speak to us. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

John chapter 9:35. The man's been kicked out of the synagogue and John tells us that Jesus heard that they had thrown him out of the synagogue. And when Jesus found him, he said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of man?" Jesus hears the news that this man's been kicked out, and that was a big deal. I mentioned the fact that he's been kicked out because in that culture, really, your synagogue that you were a part of, that was your connection.

That was your community. It's where your friends went. It's where a lot of business and connections would take place. And so if you were kicked out of the synagogue and your family continues to attend, you really were left out on your own. And so this was a difficult place that this man would find himself in. And Jesus hears the news. And I love the fact that Jesus is searching out this man. He finds him. He is looking for him. And Jesus does the same for us.

Jesus seeks us out. He wants a relationship with us. He wants to know you. He wants you to know Him. He is looking for you. And look at the question that He asks this man who was formally blind. Do you believe in the Son of Man? This is the question that he asks of every one of us. Do you believe in the Son of Man? This is the question.

How you answer this question is more important than how you will answer any question in life. Because how you answer that question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man will determine if you have spiritual sight or you are spiritually blind." My prayer often for my family members and my friends and those that I care about who don't know Jesus. They have not proclaimed Him as Savior or Messiah of their life yet. I pray that they will have an encounter with Jesus like this.

I pray that they will have another opportunity to answer this question that Jesus would be standing before them and say, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Look at this man's response in verse 36. "Who is He, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in Him." I find this interesting that even after being healed, this man hasn't come to the full conclusion or connection that Jesus is actually the Messiah, that He is the Son of God, the Son of Man, God in the flesh.

If you remember when He was being interrogated by the Pharisees, he claimed that Jesus must be at least a prophet. I know that He must be a prophet because He opened my eyes, and God doesn't listen to sinners. So He must be from God, but that's all I know. And so this part of the story shows me the process of faith. It is often over time that we come to the conclusion of who Jesus is.

Now, for some people, it happens overnight, and it's just like this light is turned on, and they instantly understand it, and it all makes sense. But for this man, and often for many of us, it is a process of learning who Jesus is. And in this story, the man's soil was ready to receive the truth about the Son of Man. He says, "Tell me who he is so I can believe." Ironically, of course, it's the one that's standing before him in verse 37.

Jesus said, "You have now seen Him. In fact, He is the one speaking with you." Jesus reveals Himself to the blind man. No riddles, no parables, just the truth. It is the person that is standing before you. You are talking to Him. Again, I pray that God would reveal Himself to the lost in this way. I pray that He would come before those that I care about and reveal Himself to them.

How does the man respond in verse 38? "Then the man said, ' Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him. ' The man responds in faith. Here's the interesting thing. Let me ask you a question at this point. Let's just pause the story. How many of you would say that this man is saved at this point? He has proclaimed Jesus as his savior. Would you believe that? I would. Do you notice what he did?

I mean, Jesus is standing before him and says, "Do you believe in the Son of Man? I don't know who he is. Tell me." Jesus says, "It's me." And his response is, "Lord, I believe and he worshiped him." I wanted to stop here because as somebody who was raised in the church and had conversations with a lot of different people about faith and when you're saved and if you're not saved, I want to make it abundantly clear that salvation doesn't have to be made difficult.

As someone who was raised in the church and gone to church camp and done all of that stuff, sometimes I feel like we make it way too hard for somebody to come to the realization that Jesus is God. You don't have to jump through hoops. You don't have to say the perfect sinner's prayer. There's nothing wrong with the sinner's prayer, but it's not necessary. Here is what is necessary. I believe for God sees your heart.

Now, I hope this doesn't cause a big problem, and I get a lot of emails later this week, okay? But I believe that there are people in the church who have prayed the sinner's prayer and aren't saved because they didn't mean it. I believe there's people in the church that say, "You know what? Yeah, I go to church my whole life. It's on my calendar and I get up on Sunday mornings and I do that and I've prayed the sinner's prayer, but they just go on living their life as if nothing has happened.

I also believe that there are people who have never said the sinner's prayer and are saved because they recognize their need for a savior. Why can I say that? Because it isn't about a specific prayer or program or list of things that you need to do. It's about faith. And God sees your heart. Jesus gives this man a chance to respond to the invitation.

And I believe that God gives everyone a chance to respond to this invitation. Do you believe in the Son of man? Now, why do I believe that? Why do I believe that God gives every single human being the chance to answer that question? Well, because as I read Scripture and I hear and read about the character traits of God, God is just. He is fair, which means in my mind, which I know is a limited human mind, it is not just or fair for God to send somebody to hell who hasn't had the chance to receive him.

So you might ask me the question that I get asked all the time. This is the question, right? You have probably been asked this question. So what about the person living in Africa who's never heard the name of Jesus? Isn't that the question? What happens to that person? They've never been given the chance to receive Christ. Here's my answer to that question. I don't know how, but I know without a shadow of a doubt that that person has been given the invitation to respond to Jesus.

I don't know how, but I am telling you because God is just and because He is fair that there is no person that's going to stand before God on Judgment Day and say, "I just didn't know any better." No one ever told me. That's not the way that it works. And here's the good news. This is often what I will tell that person that asks me the question, "You know the good news for you? You aren't that person living in Africa anyway. You do know the name of Jesus. You will be held responsible. And you are being given that chance now to respond.

Who do you say the Son of Man is? Do you believe? I will unpack that a little more later, but let's wrap up here in verse 39. Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." This is the whole point behind the healing taking place. You see, when we read Scripture and we read in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and they record these miracles that take place, you need to understand that they weren't just random events.

Jesus wasn't just going around randomly healing people and doing things. There was a point behind what was taking place. And the point that John is sharing with us that he received from this whole thing is that there is a difference between physical blindness and spiritual blindness. And Jesus came so that those that maybe were physically blind could be healed. He is going to fulfill the prophecies in Isaiah chapter 35 and 42, but he was much more concerned about spiritual healing, that you would spiritually be able to see Him because it is in Jesus that the blind will see.

And yet, unfortunately, there are many who claim to see who are actually blind. So He gives us an example here in verse 40 and 41. Some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard Jesus say this and they asked, "What? Are we blind too?" They knew that He was talking about them. And Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin.

But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains." You see, the Pharisees claimed to see and understand these spiritual matters, but they had become blind. They were guilty. They did not recognize Jesus as the light that penetrated the darkness. They did not see Jesus as the light that enabled them to see everything clearly in the world. They had missed him. And I have personally come to believe that there are many people in the church who are still spiritually blind.

And so my prayer is that our eyes would be opened, that our hearts would be softened, and that our faith would be firm in the one who opens blind eyes. I don't know your heart this morning. I don't know what you believe. You might even be listening on the radio or watching online. But here is what I do believe. Jesus is

standing before you with an invitation, and he's asking you, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Now, I said earlier that this doesn't need to be complicated, and it doesn't.

It can be as simple as saying, "I believe," but hopefully you haven't sent the email to me yet. You hit pause on that, okay? At the same time, I don't want anyone to be fooled by the enemy that this can just be a get out of jail free card. You don't get to just come to church and say, "Okay, yep, I will make the statement. Tell me what I need to say. I will go ahead and say it." You cannot simply just speak these words and then go on with normal life.

When you say, "I believe," it changes everything. If you do go on with your normal life, it means that you don't understand what you just said. There isn't a secret formula for salvation. But if you truly believe, your life will radically be changed. When you say, "I believe," what you are saying is, "I am a sinner in need of God's grace. I need to repent of my sins.

I know that there is no way for me to make my way back to a holy God because of all the mistakes I've made. And so I need a Savior. And I believe that that Savior is Jesus Christ. I believe that He was the Son of God. I believe that He was the Son of Man. God in the flesh came to this earth to die on the cross for my sins so that I could spend an eternity with a Holy Father. And I believe that He was raised on the third day.

And so I believe that I also can be raised back to life. You see, when you say, "I believe," all of those things become true. Not a formula, not a certain prayer that you have to say. And when you believe that is true, you cannot go on life the same. You just can't because the things that used to matter don't matter anymore.

We just sang the song, "All of the things that I once counted as gain, all of the things that used to be important, I now consider lost." It's all rubbish. It's nothing. It doesn't matter anymore. Your life is radically transformed. Now, for those that are here today and you say, "Yes, Pastor, I believe. I have said it. I have proclaimed it. My life has changed." Let me just ask you a question. I asked myself the same question.

As a follower of Jesus, where are my eyes focused? Where is my vision directed? Jesus said that our eyes would be the lamp of our bodies, and if our eyes were healthy, then our whole body would be full of light. If spiritual blindness is a condition that affects the religious, you and I should be even more cautious to make sure that our eyes are focused on Jesus. That we would never get sidetracked.

We would never allow the enemy to allow our focus to shift from Him. And yet, if we are all honest, we're guilty of that. We're guilty of the times where our focus gets taken away from Jesus, and we become concerned about things that maybe we even think are good. We're concerned about the church. We're concerned about what church looks like, and how we do church, and the types of songs that we sing, and all of these different things. Those are all things that we may be concerned about, but if our focus is not on Jesus, we're in the wrong.

We could be guilty of becoming spiritually blind. Even for me as a pastor, again, you need to know that I'm just a normal person like you are. And it's easy for me to get caught up in just doing church. It's my job. It's my responsibility. Of course, I want to do a good job at it. I want to have a sense of satisfaction of saying, "Yes, God, I'm trying to be obedient." And so many times, I come in here on a Sunday morning.

I come when the worship team is practicing, and I go through my message, and it just gives me a time to do that. And I can't tell you almost every Sunday, God has to grab my attention and say, "Joel, I just remind you, it's not about you. It's not about you. I don't care how good you do today or how bad you do today. I just want you to be faithful." And it gradually works into that time where it's just like, "I just want to praise him. I just want to thank him. That's all I want to do with my life.

I just want to say thank you because he has saved me, saved me from eternal damnation which I deserve because of my mistakes." And so if you are here today, if you're watching online or listening, and you are a follower of Jesus Christ, and you have said, "I believe," may we continue to worship Him together? May we

continue to pray for God's grace and His goodness in our lives? May we continue to lift up those around us that have not come to that realization?

Pray for another opportunity for Jesus to stand before them and say, "Do you believe in the Son of man? And may they and we respond, I believe." Let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, you know the hearts of every person that is here. We cannot hide it from you. We can't fake it. You see into our inner being.

And so, Lord, if there are people here that have just played the game, maybe have said the words out of their mouths, but their heart didn't mean it, the altar is always open. And it might be embarrassing. It might be difficult to come to the altar because the enemy may try to hold us back.

But I just pray that they would come forward with reckless abandon and cry out to you and say, "I truly believe." Lord, maybe there's people here that just need prayer. Maybe they're going through a difficult time. Maybe they have questions about this whole faith thing. They're still trying to make sense of it. Would they be willing to come up and receive prayer from those that are here? May we praise you. We thank you for who you are.

It's in Jesus ' name we pray. Amen.