

John 9

Pastor Ryan Howell / Sunday Morning Study

Special Messages / John 9

Please turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John, Chapter 9. If you have headers in your Bible, I'm sure that you'll be able to see that we are going to examine and study one of the miracles of healing performed by Jesus in His ministry. Toward the end of this Gospel, John tells us his purpose in writing this Gospel.

In Chapter 20:30, he says:

John 20:30-31 NKJV

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are what we refer to as the synoptic gospels. The word synoptic means "to see together". They do a great job of recounting the events that occurred before, during, and after Jesus' three years of ministry on earth. John was the last gospel to be written. It leaves out a lot of important events that the other three gospels cover such as Jesus' birth, Jesus' baptism, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, Jesus' confrontations with demons, Jesus' parables, the Last Supper, the night Jesus spent in the garden, and Jesus' ascension into Heaven. This is because John's gospel is written in light of what the other gospels have already said. The synoptic gospels show us more what Jesus taught and did. John shows who Jesus was.

In order to accomplish his purpose of writing this gospel, which is that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we may have life in His name, John shows us who Jesus is by showing us 7 miracles, 7 "I AM" statements, and multiple witness testimonies of who Jesus is. In this chapter, we have both one of the 7 miracles and one of the 7 "I AM" statements.

I will be honest with you. The place which my message comes from this morning is much of what God has been ministering to me and working in me in this past year. Earlier this week my mom and I were discussing how the enemy has been relentlessly coming after our family in this year. In our family it seems as though we have received sucker punch after sucker punch this year. It certainly has had it's high moments, like finding out we're going to be having a son, but truthfully much of this year has been incredibly difficult. I know it's not just us. Trials and tribulation is just an unfortunate part of our collective human experience. My desire for us this morning is that we go through this text being people that are open and vulnerable about our struggles. And in this text, we'll see how God works even in the midst of the worst of circumstances.

Beginning in Verse 1:

John 9:1-2 NKJV

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

To give you an idea of the context of where we are, Jesus has just left a very heated and tense confrontation with the Pharisees at the end of Chapter 8. They were so fed up with what He said, that they picked up stones to throw at Him, so Jesus left the temple. Verse 1 begins with the idea that the transition from what just happened in Chapter 8 to what we're now reading about in Chapter 9 is immediate. Jesus was not phased by deadly confrontations and they certainly did not stop or restrain His work.

When Jesus had left the temple, He saw a man that had been blind since birth. This was an affliction he had known for his entire life. In this day, they did not have the accommodations for disabilities that we do today. A debilitating condition like this would have robbed every hope of having a "normal" life. He couldn't work. He couldn't hunt. There was not much that he was able to do for himself in order to survive. So, like most afflicted people in this day, he was left to beg on the streets and rely solely upon the generosity of whichever strangers would pass him by that day.

I am sure that hundreds of people walked past him every day completely ignoring his existence. This man that did not have the ability to see anyone around him, was likely unseen by those around him. But you know who did see? You know who did notice him sitting there? Jesus did. You know that there are many names for the Lord found in the Bible. There is Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides. There is Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. There is Jehovah Shalom, the Lord our peace. There is El Shaddai, the Lord Almighty. These are only a few of the ones we find in Scripture. What we see here in Verse 1 is El Roi, the God who sees. I am not attempting to over-spiritualize the Scriptures here. The word which is translated as "He saw" means to perceive, to discern, to know. Jesus did not just see this blind man the way He could see the sky above Him, but He saw him in a much deeper and intimate way. Jesus saw his struggle. He saw his heart. He saw his pain. I tell you this morning that God sees you.

One of the unfortunate things that we as people do is disguise and mask the truth of what's really going on in our hearts. I'll be the first to confess to you that there are many Sunday mornings where I greet some of you and you ask me how I'm doing and I smile and say, "I'm doing good!" when in reality, I most certainly am not. One woman who I regard as one of my spiritual moms in the faith thankfully had a gifting to see through my mask. She'd ask me, "How are you?" and I'd say, "I'm good", and then she'd say, "Great, now how are you really doing?". I am thankful for that because it meant that I was being given an opportunity to bring what I was struggling with to the surface. To talk about it and be vulnerable about it. In doing that, it meant that I was no longer struggling alone. There were times where she couldn't say much to ease my burden, but it still helped that there was someone who knew my struggle. As each of you sit in here this morning, you all carry your own burdens. Some of you may be coming out of one of the worst weeks of your life. Some of

you may have had a great week. Some of you may be wondering where you're going to find the strength to keep moving forward each day. Some of you may have been entertaining the thought of simply giving up this week. I pray you're talking about those things with a brother or sister, but nonetheless, Satan takes advantage of our struggles by feeding us the lie that we are entirely alone in our suffering. Let me tell you, God sees you. He sees your heart. He sees your pain. He sees your brokenness. No thought, emotion, feeling, or motive is hidden from His sight. I hope it encourages you this morning to know that you are perfectly known, perceived, and discerned by God even as you sit here right now.

This was the truth for the blind man. Once Jesus saw him, the disciples essentially ask Him, "Who is to blame for this man's condition?" "Is it his parent's fault because they sinned?" "Or is it his fault because he sinned?". So often, when there is suffering, we like to assign blame to someone or something. We observe something terrible and ask, "Who's fault is this?". I believe what the disciples are really asking is "Why is this man blind?". If you are a Christian and you've found yourself in the midst of a trial, whether it be physical, spiritual, or mental, you have likely asked God the question, "Why are you letting this happen to me?". I know I certainly have.

Here's what Jesus says and does in response:

John 9:3-7 NKJV

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

The question was posed by the disciples in the way that it was because it was common belief amongst the Jews that physical ailments or disabilities were always directly correlated to a sin that had been committed. Some argued that it was possible for a baby to sin in the womb. The disciples here are wondering if perhaps this man is blind as a punishment of one of the sins his parents had committed. Look, just because you are physically or mentally afflicted does not mean you are being punished because of sin. Sins can certainly have a consequence of physical or mental affliction, but it is never the case that every affliction is a punishment for sin. Jesus says that this man is blind so that the works of God should be revealed in Him. I'll come back to that later.

Jesus continues on to say that He must do the will of His Father while it is day - the time of His earthly ministry. I love how the disciples saw this blind man as the object of a theological discussion, but Jesus sees him as person that needs help. You'll remember that the disciples often argued who would be the greatest among them. I'm sure at times they carried a sense of pride that Jesus had chosen them to be His disciples. This moment they saw as a prudent opportunity to clear up age old debates. Jesus was not interested in that. Jesus' desire was to work the works of God

here on earth because that was the Father's will. We do not serve an idle God. Our God is actively working for us in ministering to us in practical ways.

So, Jesus gets to work. He spits in the dirt, made clay, and rubbed it on the blind man's eyes. This method is.....interesting to say the least. Yet, everything about it was intentional. There are three main purposes that this particular method serves:

1. First, this is all happening on the Sabbath. Jesus is intentionally doing this to offend the man made traditions associated with the observation of the Sabbath. This is going to lead to a conflict with the Pharisees later in the chapter.
2. Secondly, Jesus performed every miracle of healing in a different way to show us that the power is not in a method, the power is in God. If we could relegate the miracles of Jesus to a method, we'd certainly try to recreate them and would likely end up worshipping the method rather than the one actually performing the healing.
3. Lastly, I believe Jesus chose this method specifically to show us that God will often work in ways that we would never expect. We may never understand the methods in which God chooses to operate, but our lack of understanding behind them does not make them any less effective. You may even object to a particular method that God is using, but it's not about the method, it's all about the One doing the work.

Once Jesus anointed the blind man's eyes with the clay, He instructs him to go wash in the pool of Siloam in order for the healing to happen.

The pool of Siloam is an interesting site. The waters of the pool of Siloam flowed from the Gihon spring which located in the Kidron valley. King Hezekiah ordered the flow of the Gihon spring to be rerouted through what we call Hezekiah's tunnel today. He did this because the Assyrian king Sennacherib was leading an assault on Jerusalem. The spring of Gihon was located outside of Jerusalem's walls, so Sennacherib could have easily cut off their water supply. Hezekiah's rerouting of the spring of Gihon ensured that his people would always have access to water. The pool of Siloam got it's name because the water in it was 'sent' through the tunnels and into the city.

Jesus did not tell the blind man to go wash in the pool of Siloam because there was something special about those waters. Even though Jesus initiated this entire work, He still required a faith-driven response from this blind man in order for the healing to happen. The blind man received no assurance that this was anything other than a fool's errand, but by faith, he obeyed. It is undoubtedly the power of God, and only the power of God, that causes us to see miracles in our own lives but God still desires faith driven obedience from us. It takes faith to remain faithful to God in a season that doesn't make sense, but we don't put our faith in methods or circumstances, we put our faith in the One True Living God. The blind man obeys....and now, he sees for the first time. I can't imagine how amazing that must have been for him.

Before we move on, here Jesus fulfills yet another prophecy about the Messiah found in [Isaiah 35:5](#):

Isaiah 35:5 NKJV

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Continuing in Verse 8:

John 9:8-9 NKJV

Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he."

Evidently, what happened to this man seemed a little too good to be true in the eyes of the people that knew him. So they speculated as to whether or not he actually was the blind man they originally saw begging just earlier that day. Of course, he speaks up and says, "Hey, I'm qualified to resolve this argument, I am that man that was blind!"

John 9:10-12 NKJV

Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

Take note here how this man refers to Jesus. He doesn't know where Jesus is from, he doesn't know that Jesus is the Messiah, he doesn't know what we know in that Jesus is God in the flesh. All he knows is His name and what Jesus did for him. This is the beginning of a progressive revelation of who Jesus is in this man.

John 9:13-16 NKJV

They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

Here's the big sticking point for the Pharisees. Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath. It was a direct violation of their interpretation of the Sabbath. Once he explains to the Pharisees what happened, there was division. You had the hardcore traditionalists saying, "Nope, can't be of God because He did this on the Sabbath". Then you had those saying, "Wait a minute, how could He do these things if He's just a mere sinner?". So the Pharisees are spinning their wheels trying to figure out exactly what's going on here. What a tall task it is to figure out how God works, no?

John 9:17 NKJV

They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

Here's the next step in the progressive revelation. First, it was a man called Jesus. Now, he's saying that Jesus is a prophet. We know that Jesus is much more than just a prophet, but this formerly blind man is starting to catch on. It's starting to sink in exactly what's happened. He's starting to realize that no mere man could have done this for him.

John 9:18 NKJV

But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight.

Like I said, the Pharisees are spinning their wheels trying to figure out what's going on here. That is because this kind of evidence is so incredibly hard to argue against. You know, I love and appreciate the field of apologetics. I'm so appreciative of the people who have dedicated their lives to showing that the Bible is a historically reliable account over several thousand years of history. I'm so appreciative of those who have dedicated their lives to showing our how understanding of modern science still points to a Creator. But you know what the greatest evidence is that Christianity is not just some manufactured belief system like all the other religions in the world? **It's you.** It's hard to argue with the testimony that says, "I once was blind, but now I see, because Jesus opened my eyes". You are the instrument which God has chosen to reveal His love, His grace, His mercy, His power, and His faithfulness. You are not just people in seats. You are all sinners saved by grace through faith with each of you having your own testimony and story of what God saved you from and exactly how He worked that out in your life. It's one of my favorite things to listen to someone's testimony because each and every one of them is unique. My testimony is my testimony. Your testimony is your testimony. My testimony can't be your testimony and your testimony can't be my testimony. Never underestimate the power of your testimony. No testimony is more impactful than another, because each testimony is a miracle in itself.

Revelation 12 speaks of war that breaks out in heaven between Satan and his demons against Michael and his angels. The war ends in Satan and his demons being cast out heaven. It describes Satan as the accuser of the brethren who accused them before God day and night. How was the battle won? By the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony. The blood of the Lamb overcame the accusations of Satan because the blood washes and cleanses us. The word of their testimony overcame the deceptions of Satan against them because they knew and remembered the work of God in their lives, enabling them to serve as a faithful witness to who He is.

Your testimony is powerful. Know it. Remember it. Treasure it. **Tell it.** You are the greatest proof and the greatest evidence that Christianity is in fact true.

Because the Jews refused to believe that this man was actually blind, probably thinking this whole ordeal to be an elaborate ruse, called his parents in to testify of him.

John 9:19-23 NKJV

And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." His parents said these *things* because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed *that He was Christ*, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

It had already been established that if anyone were to profess Jesus as the Messiah they would be excommunicated out of the synagogue. They would be ostracized in society. His parents knew this and were afraid that this would happen to them so they pass the buck back to their son.

John 9:24-25 NKJV

So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

Now the Pharisees are attempting to get him to concede. Give God the glory, but don't acknowledge Jesus because we know He is a sinner. He continues to hold to the simplicity of his testimony. "You're saying he's a sinner and whether He is or not I don't know, but the one thing I do know is that once I was blind but now I see".

John 9:26 NKJV

Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

The Pharisees press him again. "What did He do?" "How did He do it?". Evidently, this man is getting tired of this and I love his response in Verse 27:

John 9:27 NKJV

He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear *it* again? Do you also want to become His disciples?"

Bam! You want me to keep telling you? Why? You want to become His disciples too? I love that.

John 9:28-33 NKJV

Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; *as for this fellow*, we do not know where He is from." The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has

been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

I love here how this man uses the Scriptures, which the Pharisees claim to love, to show them how their argument that Jesus is a sinner is completely misaligned to what Scripture actually says.

Psalms 66:18 NKJV

If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

Isaiah 1:15 NKJV

When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.

Ezekiel 8:18 NKJV

Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."

Scripture is clear that God will hear the prayers of sinners, unless the sinner cries out "God have mercy on me a sinner". He's essentially establishing this case that Scripture does say that God wouldn't do this kind of work through a wicked man. But he also says, "You saying Jesus is a wicked man is inconsistent with what He has done for me!". "If He were not of God, He would not have been able to heal me".

When you're trying to argue with people that have already made up their mind about something, they just get irrational once you disprove their position with facts. What he's saying makes complete sense, but the Pharisees never wanted the facts, they just wanted to be proven right. Here's how the Pharisees reply to him:

John 9:34 NKJV

They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

Here they essentially deem him guilty of committing a sin in the womb. Completely irrational. They get on their high horse and they cast him out of the synagogue.

John 9:35 NKJV

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

The idea here is that when Jesus heard they had cast him out, He went looking for him.

John 9:36-38 NKJV

He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.

Here is culmination of the progressive revelation that's been going on in this man. First, Jesus was just a man. Second, he acknowledges Jesus as a prophet. Finally, he comes to the conclusion he was meant to come to all along. Jesus is the Son of God. He declares his belief and he falls down and worships Jesus. Understand what's just happened here. A sinner has been pulled out of eternal hell and given the promise of everlasting life.

John 9:39-41 NKJV

And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.

Jesus states that He has come into the world to draw the dividing line between those who are blind and those who think they see. To force them to pick a side. The Pharisees maintain their position of believing that they are not blind, which causes their sin to remain because they refuse to acknowledge the fact that they are spiritually blind. In this blind man, we see a testimony that all of us can share. We were once blind, but now we see because Jesus has opened our eyes. One thing the Pharisees got right, give God the glory for that!

Knowing the culmination of this story, I'd like to back to the question that is posed to Jesus in Verse 2. "Why?". "Why was this man born blind?". Jesus says, "This man was born blind so that the works of God would be revealed in him". Would you agree that this chapter is a work of God? Would you agree that God worked out something through his condition that was likely better than anything he could have dreamt up?

In each of our lives, there are things which God allows that we simply do not understand. We may never understand them. In the heat of the moment, we ask, "Why God?" "Why are you allowing this?". If God answered your question by saying, "I allowed this to happen, or I am allowing this to happen, so that the works of God would be revealed in you", would that be a good enough answer for you? I'll be transparent with you. It's easy for me to accept this truth in this present moment. At church, surrounded by brothers and sisters in Christ. For me, it's in the middle of the night when I'm overcome with fear and anger that it's harder for that answer to be good enough for me. When what God is allowing is actively hurting me or people that I love, that's when it becomes hard. It's hard because we're human. And we serve a God that works in ways we could never hope to understand on this side of eternity. So what do we have to hold on to? Not much other than the promises, the proven character, and faithfulness of God which is revealed to us in His word. We observed the objective fact that God worked through this blind man's affliction. So much of this

chapter we talk about the Pharisees, but did you also notice that the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind saw what God did in him? What about them? How many of them would eventually come to faith in Christ because of what God allowed in the blind man's life? What an honor for the blind man, to be used in such a mighty and powerful way. The end of all of it, the man falls down at Jesus' feet and worships Him. God gets the glory. Is it good enough for you to know that God is allowing things that you may never understand so that He can perform a work in your life which ultimately glorifies Him? For me, I have to remember that Jesus is worthy of all of my praise. Truly, deep down my heart's desire is to glorify and magnify Him with my life. If God is allowing the afflictions I'm dealing with so that He will one day do something so amazing that only He could get the glory for, then so be it. He is worthy.

On the flip side of this, what about the afflictions that God allows that He doesn't heal? The Bible has something to say about that too.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9a NKJV

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

We don't know what this thorn in the flesh was, but we know it was painful. Like Paul, I have prayed so many times that the Lord would simply take away the things that were troubling me. Yet He didn't. But He did point me to what He says here in Verse 9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness". What he says in the last part of Verse 9 and 10 just blows my mind:

2 Corinthians 12:9b-10 NKJV

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Not only does the desire for my infirmities to be taken away disappear, but now I take pleasure in them because it is through those infirmities that the power of Christ rests upon me.

You're going to have a hard time enduring trials and tribulation as a believer if you can't look upon what Jesus has done for you and come to the ultimate conclusion that there is nothing more important than your life, everything you are, giving Him the glory, praise, and honor that He truly deserves. It's hard because these afflictions that God allows often stretch us to the end of our faith. So, whether God heals me, whether God grants me what I'm asking, or whether He doesn't. To God be the glory. If it's Him getting all the glory at the end of it, Lord let Your will be done.

I'll tell you that in the trials that our family has endured over the last year, I've been frustrated, angry, discontented, and hopeless. Even towards God. Awhile back, I hit my breaking point. It was a small thing that sent me over the edge, but it certainly did it. I was so angry that God was continuing to allow something I'd been asking Him to take away for a long time, and man I lost it. I thank God that He gave me a wife that was patient enough to sit with me through my temper tantrum while she herself was struggling. At the end of it, the Lord brought my mind back to 2019. That was the year that truly began walking with the Lord. I look at that time, and I look at where I am now, and I acknowledge that God alone is responsible for the two very different pictures I was looking at. Even in just these few years, He's transformed me into someone I never thought I could be. Given me blessings I never thought I could have. I know that His word says He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. I take comfort in knowing that the same God who was working in my life then is working in my life now, even through this affliction that I do not understand. By faith, holding onto His promises, His faithfulness, and His love for me.

If this morning you are at the end of your rope. If you are hurting. If you are angry. If you are full of doubt because God is allowing something that you don't understand. I point you back to the John Chapter 9 work that God has already done. You once were blinded by sin, but He has opened your eyes. That's a miracle in itself. But perhaps the why in your circumstance is simply so that the works of God may be revealed in you. The story that you'll have to tell the world about who He is. If that is simply it, then you know what? To God be the glory.

Let's pray.