

Jesus, the light of the world

John 9:1-41

Key Verse 9:5

“While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

In this passage Jesus meets a blind beggar. This blind man was born this way. The moment he entered the world his life has been dark. Imagine what that’s like. He has never seen his parents or the faces of his loved ones. He probably never went to school, didn’t know how to read or write. He never played sports or games, never swam in the ocean, never climbed a tree. He likely had few, if any, friends. He was **alone**. As he got older, he wanted to be more independent but how could he be. He couldn’t go anywhere without someone helping him. He would never have the chance to get married and have children. He felt **helpless** and **useless**. He may have wondered why he was even born. Or **why was he born like this?** Eventually the only thing he could do was sit by the temple gate and beg. People insulted him, cursed him. Few showed him kindness or pity. He felt **guilty** and **judged** by everyone. They said he or his parents sinned, and that’s why he was like this. He had to listen to their condemnation day after day. Worst of all, he had **no hope**. There was no hope that his condition would ever change. Whatever dreams he may have had, they died long ago. And one day he too would die probably while begging at this temple gate. This was his world. He had **no power** to change it. His whole world was literally and spiritually **dark**. Until he met Jesus.

Only one person could change this man’s darkness and fill it with light. Only Jesus could do this because only Jesus is the light of the world. As we will see in this passage, by touching this man’s eyes, Jesus gives him more than just the ability to see. Jesus brings this man physical and spiritual healing. He gives this man new faith, new purpose...a new life.

Living in the light for this man meant finally he was free from darkness. Don’t we want this same freedom? But why does it sometimes feel like we are still trapped by elements of darkness? Why are we not immune to experiencing the same feelings as a blind man? Why do we feel lonely, helpless, guilty, burdened, and hopeless? And in these moments why do we look for someone to blame for our situation, or hide in the darkness of our self-pity, instead of turning to Jesus. It’s because we forget that Jesus is our light.

Today Jesus wants to remind us that he has indeed freed us from the darkness. Whatever we are going through in life, we can find hope and healing because Jesus is the light of the world. In him there is no fatalism. Instead he displays his glory in our lives. He wants to shine in us. He wants people to see his light in us so that they too can believe. Do you believe Jesus wants to shine his light in your life? Let us pray that Jesus would shine brightly in all of us, and be reminded that Jesus is our personal light and savior.

Read verses 1-2. As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Jesus had just escaped being stoned by the religious leaders in chapter 8. If someone is trying to kill you, the best thing to do to save yourself is to run. As fast as you can. But verse 1 says Jesus saw a man blind from birth. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people passed by this blind beggar every day. And they completely ignored him. But not Jesus. He took notice of this man and stopped to heal him. The heart of God is to save people like this blind man, one relationship at a time.

The disciples saw the heart of God as something different. They asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” The Jewish understanding of God was that every single bad thing that happened in a person’s life was directly related to every wrongdoing the person did. So, for example, if you stole your neighbor’s donkey, you could be sure a rock would soon fall on your head.

As a father, I watch my kids do the wrong things all the time. One time, I hit my son in the head when he did something wrong. I regret it now because I noticed when he catches himself saying or doing something wrong he flinches as if I am going to hit him in the head again. This is what people thought of God, living in fear of what he might do next. It was a hard way to live, and a sad way to look at God. It’s this view that prompted the disciples’ question.

If we look at the disciple’s question again, what are they really asking? Theirs is really a question of blame. Who can we blame for this man’s situation? It’s an extremely negative point of view. Because it assumes that there could be no good reason for this man to be this way. It’s also a fatalistic point of view in which they

assume there is no way for this man's life to get better. Unforgiving God + difficult events in life = fatalistic and negative thoughts. Thank God that with Jesus this math doesn't add up. Because Jesus is the X factor. Whenever we face challenges in life, whenever things don't go our way, we might be tempted to think like the disciples. Let's resist this temptation because there is no fatalism in Jesus. Instead of looking for someone to blame, let us look to Jesus for answers. This what Jesus tells his disciples in verse 3.

Read verse 3. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

Jesus tells his disciples that you assume this is a punishment for someone's sin. Jesus says it's not a punishment, but an opportunity for God to be displayed in this man's life. Everyone must have thought that this man's life was a waste. Jesus says God wants to use this man to tell the world who God is. To reveal God's grace, his power, his glory. That's not a waste, that's a blessing! Just as there is no fatalism in Jesus, there is no randomness in Jesus. He doesn't make mistakes. He had a clear purpose for this man's life, and he has a clear purpose for us too.

Many of you probably know who Nick Vujicic is. He was born without limbs, no arms and no legs. In his testimony, he shares how hard it was for him growing up. He was bullied and teased. He suffered from depression and tried to commit suicide. He felt like an outcast and a burden to people. He was angry and blamed God. He admits he didn't see himself having a bright future. Despite all this, during this time, his parents reminded him that God created him for a reason, and that his worth wasn't tied to his ability to do this or that, but it was tied to God. At age 15, Nick accepted Jesus personally through this very same passage, John 9. He read how Jesus said that the blind man was born that way so that the works of God would be revealed through him. Nick came to believe that God had a plan for his life, and though he didn't know what it was, he committed himself to trusting God daily with his life. Now he has reached millions of people in over 63 countries with his testimony and the gospel message. He says that God took a man without arms and legs to be God's hands and feet. When asked if he would have had the same impact on the world if he had been born normally, he says, "I don't think so...I am pretty sure I would have made different choices...I would have become an accountant or something."

Like this blind man, like Nick Vujicic, sometimes we suffer hardship so that we might see God's amazing work in us. We may not see his plan right away, but if we trust in his word eventually God will reveal his glory in us. The question is, in

these moments, will we seek someone to blame for our trouble, or will we submit to God's will and trust him to show us his good purpose through our struggle? Jesus reminds us why we should choose to put our trust in him.

Read verses 4-5. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Jesus makes it clear he was sent by the Father for a purpose. According to verse 4, it was to do the work of the Father. What is it that God wanted him to do? The answer can be found in Matthew 11 when John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask if Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus said, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."

God sent Jesus as the promised Messiah who came to perform amazing miracles, preach the gospel message, and ultimately die on the cross for our sins and rise again from the dead. So that we might turn to God and be free from the power of sin and death. He sent Jesus to be the light of the world who would show us our sin, and at the same time, reveal God's love for sinners like us. God knew we were in darkness, and we had no way out on our own. So, in his great love, he sent us the light to show us the way, he sent us Jesus.

Without Jesus, we are living in darkness and darkness equals fear. My kids and I like to watch this show called Total Blackout. People have to go into total darkness and try to identify items by touching them. In the dark, people's fear takes over and even simple items like a hair brush become scary to them. Their imagination takes over and the darkness confuses them, leads them astray. But in the light, everything changes. What the item is, what it was made for, becomes so clear. This is true with our life as well.

Our lives are defined by darkness if we don't have Jesus. We can't see why God created us. We can't see what we are living for. We are afraid of life's problems and afraid of death. Since we all die anyway, we are lead astray, tricked into believing that life is about incremental pleasures. A little more money. A little more freedom. A little more fun. Even as believers, we can be tempted by the darkness that is around us. Or we might even let these temptations creep into our heart. It's why we need the light of Jesus to drive out the darkness.

When we step into the light we see clearly why we were created. The light of Jesus shows us that we were created in God's image, and the purpose of life is not just to survive, but it is to shine! The song by Casting Crowns says, "Shine like the sun made darkness run and hide; We know we were made for so much more; Than ordinary lives; It's time for us to more than just survive; We were made to thrive." We were made to enjoy the light of Jesus which is a personal relationship with him. We were made to display the light of Jesus, his eternal joy, peace, and love. How do we do that? Look at verse 4 again. Jesus says "we" must do the works of the Father. Not just Jesus, but "we" includes you and me.

The works of the Father are the same for us as they were for Jesus. To love others sacrificially (even to die for them). To live in obedience to the Father and his word. To preach the gospel message. When we do this, we are shining the light of Jesus in our hearts and in this still dark world.

We came to this conference from many different places, with many different backgrounds, and many different problems or issues. Some of you are serving in small ministries, with just one or two families. And you might wonder if anyone even notices you. God wants you to know that Jesus is the light of the world, and He sees how you are shining his light to people who desperately need it. Some of you are struggling with sin. God wants you to know that Jesus is the light of the world, and he wants to free you from your sin. Some of you may feel like you are just getting by in life, dealing with problem after problem but never seeming to get anywhere. God wants you to know that Jesus is the light of the world. He wants you to find your purpose and direction in him. Some of you have been serving God for 30 or 40 years, and wonder if it's time to take break. God wants you to know Jesus is still the light of the world, and he still wants to shine in you. Praise God for sending us Jesus as the light of the world. May he shine in us, and may his light brighten our families, our relationships, our campuses, and even the whole world.

Read verses 6-7. After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

When it came time for Jesus to heal this blind man, he did something unusual. The disciples might have expected Jesus to heal this man with just his words. But rarely does Jesus do what's expected. Instead Jesus mixes some spit and some dirt to make mud which he then puts on this man's eyes. I'm not a doctor, but I'm pretty sure you can't find "spit mud" in the pharmacy. And even if you did, who would

buy it? After putting it on the man's eyes, Jesus tells the blind man to go and wash. At no time does Jesus tell this blind man the reason for what he is doing. How many questions do you think this blind man had in his mind? Who is this guy? What did he just put on my eyes? Why is he telling me to go and wash? Where is the pool and how do I get there? But this man trusted and obeyed Jesus's words. He overcame his doubts, and he was healed. It gives new meaning to the saying blind faith. Praise Jesus who brought light to this man's life!

Like this blind man, sometimes it's hard to see what God wants to do in our lives. We have lots of unanswered questions. Who are you God? Where are you God? Why now God? Why this way God? Why this person God? How am I going to get out of this God? Unfortunately, life is not like a box of Legos. Where we can see the finished product on the box and so then follow the step by step instructions to create it. We don't always know what the outcome in our life will be. God wants us to learn to trust him and follow him in obedience. If we do, God just might do something amazing.

Many of you know Phillip Brown. He was just named the next pastor of Washington UBF. I've known Phillip for almost 15 years. And if you had asked me 15 years ago whether him becoming the pastor would be possible, he might have been among those I least expected to be a candidate. I doubt Phillip would have expected this. But Jesus doesn't always do the expected. Phillip was just a small-town kid from the south who used to have a terrible stuttering problem. But Jesus noticed him, and what did Jesus do? He called Phillip to bible study, then to be a bible teacher, and then to be a messenger, and then to be a missionary to China. Do you know how hard that would have been for someone who stuttered every time he stood up in front of people? How many questions did he have? But the thing I always observed in Phillip was he always seemed to trust and obey Jesus's words even in the face of obvious doubts and fears that had to be swirling in his heart. Taking these small but consistent steps of faith and obedience, God did something amazing. He healed his stuttering problem, and he made him a shining light in China. Now God is going to use him to serve Washington UBF, a house of prayer for all nations. This is the power of God if we are willing to trust and obey.

I don't know what God's specific plan is for you. I don't know what school he wants you to go to, what job he wants you to have, what person he wants you to marry. I don't know why you may be going through a hard time, why your bible students won't listen to you, why you've been waiting so long for answers. The one thing I know through his word is if this blind man gave in to his questions and

doubts and walked away from Jesus, he never would have been healed and he never would have experienced the power of God. The same is true for us too. Let's pray not to give in to our anxiety but to give in to Jesus, to submit to him and trust him to lead us. If we do, we can eagerly expect the unexpected from Jesus.

Read verses 8-11. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

Once this blind man was healed, you might expect everyone around him to begin singing and dancing and praising God. But that's not how the world works. We might forgive the people for their doubts at first. The healing of a blind man is impossible. But once the blind man insisted that it was him who used to sit and beg, and explained clearly that it was Jesus who had healed him, then those doubts should have turned into faith in Jesus. But again that's not how the world works. In these next verses we will witness the personal struggle and spiritual growth of this healed man. In the face of adversity, this man could have been content in his physical healing and just walked away. But instead of walking away he held on to the truth even though it was difficult. Because he wasn't content in just being healed physically, this man came to be healed spiritually through a personal meeting with Jesus. As we look at these verses, let us pray to come to meet Jesus personally too at this conference.

Look at verses 13-15. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 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."

These Pharisees are like little children, specifically they remind me of my 5 year old son Jakey. Sometimes he forgets the big picture. I remember one day when we had the greatest day. He had been wanting to go to Chuck E Cheese for so long so we went out to Chuck E Cheese, he played games, won prizes, ate ice cream. When it was time to go home, we got in the car, and he suddenly asked me to take him out for dinner. I said no because it was getting late and mommy made dinner for us at home. Then he said, "This is the worst day ever." This blind man was healed and given his sight, among the greatest miracles ever recorded in the bible, but because it happened on the Sabbath the Pharisees are like "worst day ever".

Read verses 16-17. 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. 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.”

The Pharisees were spiritually blind. This is what Jesus says about them in verse 41. They had all the knowledge about God. They memorized lots of Scripture, but they didn't know Jesus or experience his grace in their lives. In fact, they were blind because they didn't think they needed God's grace. But this healed man did know Jesus's grace and it is a former blind beggar who begins to have his spiritual eyes opened to see who Jesus is.

Read verses 24-25. A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner.” He replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

The Pharisees brought the man in a second time and this time they went after Jesus. We know Jesus is a sinner! They tried to get the man to say the same. Look at the man's response again in verse 25. “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” Mic drop, boom! What more did the man have to say? How much more convincing evidence did the Pharisees need? This man admitted he was in no position to judge another person. But he did have confidence in one thing: Jesus's amazing grace in his life. He could not ignore this grace. That he was sick and blind, and now he was healed. Even if people insulted him or tried to get him to deny Jesus, he couldn't deny what he had experienced. This personal assurance in Jesus' grace is really important to us too.

Pastor Jacob talks always about his personal time of grace. Before he was headed down a path of selfishness, chasing wealth and power at LG. Life is good. Until God rescued him through bible study and turned his life around. He talks about it a lot because it's still so vivid over 40 years later. What about you? Can you think back to a moment or time when Jesus's grace is undeniable for you? For me, I remember God's grace to send me to China, and he opened my eyes to see his heart for world mission. I can never forget what it felt like to experience God and serve God there. And he continues to remind me of his grace to call my family to serve him wherever we are. I thank God for his grace to serve the last two years in

Vietnam and I look forward to the next two years in Poland. It's never easy picking up my family and moving every 2-3 years. I can worry about a thousand things. But no matter what hardship I might face, I am always able to view my life through the prism of this grace. It's only by his grace that I could serve God in world mission. "One thing I do know. I was a selfish, irresponsible sinner who only lived for himself, but now I am still a sinner who instead struggles to live for God and for others." If you haven't experienced this grace, pray for Jesus to show you his grace at this conference. For those of you who have, what is the one thing you know? Let's hold on to it, and let us face life's ups and downs through this prism of his grace.

Read verses 30-34. The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

Being thrown out of the synagogue was probably not what the man expected when he stood up for Jesus. But that didn't dampen his belief in who Jesus is. In fact it is through this challenge that Jesus comes to find him and plant faith in his heart.

As we've learned sometimes we face adversity so that God may reveal his glory in our lives. We may not always get the resolution we want, but we can be sure that God has a purpose. Sometimes it seems, as in this instance, we go through adversity so we can come to know Jesus better, more personally. Remember this passage began with Jesus noticing this man, a blind beggar on the street. Not just so he could heal the man's blindness. But so that this man could come to know Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior.

Read verses 35-38. Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

Jesus looked for this man. And when he found him, they finally came face to face. It's unclear whether the man would have known what Jesus looked like. But he knew Jesus' voice and his heart was ready. The moment when he could finally confess, "Lord, I believe". He fell on his knees, and worshiped Jesus. In this

moment, we see the complete physical and spiritual healing of a former blind beggar. What we are witnessing is a completely new life which has found its true purpose in Jesus. He found a personal relationship with God.

He should find strength and be encouraged that we have a relationship with God. Going back to Nick Vujicic, he says his sincerest prayer was for God to give him arms and legs. When God didn't answer, he didn't despair or get upset. He found strength in his personal relationship with Jesus. He says, his personal relationship with Jesus gave him "the humility and grace to ask [God] to change my life each day. I learned that if my circumstance doesn't change then my heart needs to change."

Jesus is the light of the world because he changes our heart to love him. He changes our heart to look like Jesus's heart. And if we come to Jesus humbly, like this man, he will drive out any remaining darkness in our hearts. Even if life seems hectic or unpredictable, Jesus changes our heart to give us strength to shine as the light of the world. Jesus is the light of the world. And you too are his light. Let's pray to hold on to this grace of Jesus, and I pray we may let Jesus shine in us and through us. Let's read the key verse.