

Giver of Sight

Portraits of Jesus - John 9

February 28, 2021

DAY 1: Jesus gives the man born blind physical sight.

John 9:1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

1. The disciples assumed a cause and effect relationship or cause of suffering. Were they right? Partly right? Explain.

John 9:3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

2. Jesus lifts the perspective about one important element in suffering. It's high above just human purposes. Jesus makes a striking statement about suffering in this verse! What is His point?

3. How does His point adjust how you view suffering and difficulty?

John 9:4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

4. Night and darkness are metaphors for the fallen world and for sin. Sin loves darkness. Light is a metaphor for purity. Day is a metaphor for visibility. What is Jesus' point in these verses?

John 9:6 Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

5. Why did Jesus make mud? We've seen Jesus use objects and means with which to make an invisible miracle become "visible." We can "see" His invisible power through material means. In John 2 Jesus used six large jars and water at a wedding. He used saliva on two other occasions to heal a deaf and dumb man, and another blind man.

6. This becomes "proof" or an authentication that there was a cause and effect involved in the miracle with Jesus. It was not just "blind luck" or a "freak of nature." This will become important as the story develops.

7. We are simply told that once the man could see he immediately went home. It's highly doubtful that he went back to find Jesus and thank Him. When Jesus healed ten lepers they took off in a flash for the temple. Only one of the ten came back to thank Jesus.

8. What strikes you about Jesus in this episode?

DAY 2: What's driving the Pharisees? (What is driving us, all too often?)

1. The man born blind had also been a beggar. He was well known in Jerusalem. His neighbors and those who used to give money to him brought him to the Pharisees.

John 9:13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

2. How do you think Pharisees will respond to the blind man who can now see?

John 9:15 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."

3. What is missing in their response?

John 9:16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man (Jesus) is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.

4. Why are the Pharisees divided on who Jesus is?

5. What is always stunning about the Pharisees is their complete inability to connect with people. There is no congratulating the man, rejoicing with him. No celebrating.

6. Why is that? There is something more important to them than reflecting the love of God to the people around them. They are amassing evidence to discredit Jesus.

7. Every good thing that Jesus does is twisted into something illegal, sinful or heretical.

8. Why is discrediting Jesus more important to them? Depends on who you ask.

a. If you ask them they'd say they were defending Judaism, or the scriptures or protecting the people from Jesus.

b. If you could look in their hearts the deepest motivating reasons always have to do with self-interest. Their job security is at stake. Their status in Jerusalem and with each other is at stake.

John 9:17 Finally 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."

9. How has the blind man's view of Jesus changed?

10. Where does the deeper motivating drive toward self-interest trip you up?

DAY 3: Putting on the pressure is destructive

1. The Pharisees continue on their moral crusade to discredit Jesus. They will run over anyone who gets in their way. Next up? His parents.

John 9:18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. ¹⁹ "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

²⁰ "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind.

²¹ But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

2. The ability to rationalize any excuse for unbelief seems limitless.

3. Let's review how we have seen the Pharisees operate:

(a) It was impossible that Jesus was from God because He wouldn't have healed the man on the Sabbath.

(b) "The man had really not been blind." So they call in their next witnesses, his parents.

(c) It must be a case of mistaken identity.

The Pharisees hoped that the parents would either deny that he was their son or deny that he had been born blind.

(d) Next, they look for conflicting testimony. Perhaps how the man said he was healed will be different than how the parents tell the story.

We'll peek ahead to tomorrow for their fifth method:

(e) Discredit the means of healing (v.26)

4. The parents were terrified of what was happening instead of being able to rejoice at their son's miracle. The Pharisees had the power to throw all of them out of synagogue worship which would bring financial and person ruin to them.

5. Putting pressure on people to come through for you is always this ugly and disgusting, but because we do it in small bits and pieces in marriage, as parents, with our friends and co-workers it's not as obvious to us. We're usually not as brazen as these men. That just means that the damage is more subtle and takes longer to do its damage. Pressure is like having termites in your house.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: The stubborn refusal to listen

1. The Pharisees were getting nowhere in their crusade to discredit Jesus, so they went back to the blind man.

John 9:24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

2. "Give glory to God" is the equivalent of swearing on the bible in a modern day court to tell the truth.

3. They put the "right" testimony in the blind man's mouth. They give him "the script." But to the blind man's credit he courageously stood up to them!

John 9:25 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!"

John 9:26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

*John 9:27 He answered, "I have told you already and **you did not listen**. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"*

John 9:28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

4. Here, they bully the witness, the sixth of their methods.

John 9:30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

5. This, a sterling testimony by an "uneducated" man to the most "educated." Spot on.

John 9:34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

6. Their seventh method is to discredit the actual "EYE" witness, the man who was given his sight!

7. It is a stunning picture of how hard the human heart can be. It can ossify as hard as bone, or become like rock.

Ezekiel 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

8. What's the state of your heart? Is it hard and stubborn? Soft and teachable?

DAY 5: The willfully blind remain blind. Those who want to see will

1. This episode ends with Jesus looking for the blind man after the blind man had been kicked out. Why do you think Jesus took the initiative to seek him out?

John 9:35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

2. "Son of Man" was one of the Old Testament titles for Messiah.

John 9:36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

³⁷ *Jesus said, "You have now **seen** him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."*

³⁸ *Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.*

3. This episode and chapter is both a true story and a metaphor about personal and spiritual blindness or sight.

4. We don't know if the blind man asked for healing. Jesus just acted. His action was to create mud out of spittle and dirt. Perhaps the blind man "didn't know what 'hit' him." But he obeyed Jesus, just as he was told. The result was not just physical sight, but eventually spiritual sight.

5. What about the Pharisees? They had excellent physical sight, but they were blind spiritually, personally, and relationally. What kept them in that blind condition? The hardened belief that not only could they see and understand spiritual things but they had the best sight of all.

6. It's one thing to know you have a blind spot. It's quite another when you believe you can already see and yet you are as "blind as a bat." It is this hardness of heart, a willful blindness that Jesus now addresses...

John 9:39 Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

7. Jesus is speaking with irony. He does so to grab the attention of the Pharisees and to hammer home a stunning paradox. Let me paraphrase His statement, thusly. "Those who think they have 20/20 spiritual vision but are willfully blind will someday face judgment. But those who know they have been willfully blind but now want to see—they will see!"

8. The Pharisees react with their usual snarky, sarcastic, proud and rebellious attitude.

John 9:40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

John 9:41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

9. In other words, they confirmed just how willfully blind they were.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?