

The Blind Shall See

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Preacher: Chris Thornton

[0 : 00] Good morning, Watermark. That's good. That's good. For those of you who don't know me, my name's Chris. I am one of the pastors here at Watermark, and it's just exciting to be here again. I know it's still warming up a little bit, but I pray that God's Word would actually warm our hearts this morning as we really get into His Word together. Actually, let me just pray for us first. Father, I just thank You that You're a God who speaks.

You're a God who hears us. You're a God who knows us. And I pray, Lord, this morning You would open our eyes to see You. Open our eyes to see who You are and to live in the light of the beauty and majesty of Jesus. In Your name. Amen.

Okay. It's been a crazy week in many ways. We've had a stock market crash. We've had kids who are just being off school because of flu. There was the bus crash yesterday in Hong Kong. But it's been a crazy week in many ways. And one of the reasons why we're going through this series on who is this man is because we do live in a world which is filled with all kinds of insecurity, all kinds of things that are happening around us. But when we encounter Jesus, it changes our perspective of everything that's happening in this world.

Whatever you see on the news, when you encounter Jesus and see Him for who He really is, you can see with a new perspective. And so when we looked at last week at Nicodemus, we looked at a guy who thought as a Pharisee that he could be in a right relationship with God if he just kept the right rules. If he just did good things, then he could kind of make his way up to God. And Jesus came and said to him, basically, you've got no way of getting up to God. The only way that you can be in right relationship with me is because God has come down to you in Jesus Christ. And He wants a revolution in your heart through faith in who Jesus is. That's what we looked at last week.

[2 : 18] And so this week, we're going to look at this amazing story. I love this story. This is just a great story about, in John 9, about this blind man. And so we're going to dive right into the story.

If you've got your bulletin open in front of you, just follow along. I'm going to track through the story. And we're going to look at a few different categories. We're going to look at the blind. We're going to look at Jesus giving sight to the blind. And we're going to look at four responses that John goes through in this passage. Okay? So that's where we're going. So first of all, the blind. Jesus is walking along with His disciples in Jerusalem. And then it says, as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. Okay? He saw a man blind from birth. I don't know about you. When I am passing by in my work and I'm going, I don't see people around me. I just think I'm late. And I just see, okay, there's 10 WhatsApp messages. I've got a whole lot of stuff to do. But Jesus sees this guy. He sees this guy. And He sees that He's blind from birth. That means He has never seen the light of day. He has never seen the sun. He has been in darkness all of His life. This is what John's trying to tell us through this story. Because in John's gospel, darkness and blindness are both physical and they are spiritual. And so John is going to draw us through and show us that every single one of us is actually like this blind guy in relation to God, in relationship to His purposes in the world. We're blind. And John knows what the Old Testament says. So there's a passage in Isaiah. It says this. It says, we hope for light. And this is the people of God who'd gone away from God. He says, we hope for light and behold darkness. And for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind. We grope like those who have no eyes. For our transgressions are with us.

We know our iniquities, transgressing and denying the Lord and turning back from following our God. See, the people then had walked away from God who was meant to be their light of direction, of purpose, of purpose, of truth, of hope, of how to see in the world. They had walked away from Him.

And they were like people where the lights had gone off. And they were now groping around trying to find truth, trying to find how to find meaning in their world. And so that's the context where John then comes in. And he shows you a couple of blind people, the disciples. And the disciples, what they're doing, they don't see this man. All they do is they're judging this man for his suffering. And what's their question? Their question is, okay, whose fault is this for the suffering? Okay, was it this man who sinned or was it his parents? Because one of them sinned. And Jesus replies, you focusing on the cause gets you nowhere. Playing the blame game doesn't get you anywhere. You need to see purpose in this.

[5 : 42] This happened that the works of God might be displayed in him. You see, this man's life is to be like a billboard. You know that there's huge billboards in Causeway Bay. You know, have you seen the new one with the big screen that's moving? It's crazy. That's what his life was meant to be with a big sign saying, God at work. Displaying in full HD quality the glory of God, His goodness, His kindness, His power, His ability to take those who are broken, who are blind, and to restore and to heal and to change them. You know, that many side of beauty that Kevin talked about when he talked about the glory of God a few weeks ago. Do you remember that? That's what he was meant to display in his life. But how often are we like the disciples and we're just simply playing the blame game and we don't see this bigger purpose? You know, we don't see because we're saying, oh, well, if you hadn't put stocks, money in those stocks this last week, we'd be in a better position now. We're saying, okay, if I hadn't given into that temptation, then I wouldn't be in the mess I am now. If I had a better boss, then I wouldn't be in this situation. And it's all the blame game we play again and again and again, but it doesn't get you anywhere. Because right in the midst of whatever you're going through, frustrations and disappointments, struggles, suffering, Jesus wants to show purpose and hope. And he wants you to see and to be a display of his glory as you see him. But we're often blinded by our own perspective in life.

And so Jesus goes on. He says, verse four, night's coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

I don't know if you see, Jesus has switched from the man to the bigger issue of darkness in the world. And what Jesus is saying is every single person in the world is as blind as this blind guy in front of me. And you know, there were many other religions and philosophies around at the time of Jesus.

Jesus. And he's going to say to them, none of them will give you 2020 vision of God, of yourself, of your circumstances, or the people around you. Because only God knows the depths of your heart. And only God knows where he wants to take you. And the only way you're going to see that is when you see that I am your light. I am the light of the world. And he's not just one out of a lot of other lights. You know, choose your light. He's not that. He says, no, I am the light, the light of the world in a world which is blind. That can be offensive to many of us. But Jesus repeats it in the book of John at least twice because he wants us to see this. Now, one of the things that I think we sometimes struggle with, it doesn't matter whether you are a seeker or whether you've been a Christian for a long time, we struggle with the idea that maybe we're blind. I do. You see, I was walking along the other day over Footbridge in Shion One. And you know, it's one of those ones where everyone is walking down on the right-hand side so people can walk up on the other side, you know. And everyone's doing that obediently. But there's one old guy with two bags who decides he's just going to go down the left side. And so he's walking down the left side and everyone else is trying to push past him, get past him.

[9 : 21] He doesn't care. He's going straight down. And then up the other way comes this other big tall guy, respectable looking, comes up, starts walking up and he comes face to face with this other older guy.

And he's trying to get past him. The other guy's not leaning past. And they're just eyeballing each other. You can see the egos flashing. You can see steam coming out of the taller guy's mind. He wants to punch this guy, but he's too respectable. So eventually he kind of submits and moves down kind of angrily, kind of comments under his breath. Oh, I can't believe him. And he walks on, filled with love and compassion and joy. Not. I think he despised that guy, right? And as I'm watching on and I'm looking at this scene going on and I'm trying to call the other guy to come over and he's not listening. And I'm thinking both of these guys are idiots, right? I mean, they're just so blind. They can't see what they're doing. Aren't they stupid? And then suddenly I went to, I started walking away and suddenly I, I remember that I was twitching on a passage about blindness. And I

thought, who's blind here?

The guy who walks down, he's blind. He can't see just how selfish he's being. The guy who's coming up, oh, he can only see the other guy's sin. He can't see his own anger and can't see his own frustration, his own judgment of the other guy. And me, I'm judging all of them.

And I can't see it because I, we all feel so justified. The guy walking up, he feels justified by the other person's sin to be angry and to be hateful. And you know what? I realized sin often leads to sin, often leads to sin. And the cycle continues. Think every marriage, every workplace, every school, that's what happens. And we can only see each other's sin.

And we rarely see our own. We can't see that actually each of those guys, they need a savior to save them. I need a savior to save me. And deep down, we long for love. We long for tolerance. We long for forgiveness and peace. But what the media doesn't tell you when it talks about tolerance is the greatest barrier to tolerance in our world and love is not more education. It's not more equal opportunities. It's that we need light because we're blind to ourselves. And the worst thing, the most blind thing is we think everyone else is the problem. Right? Just think in your marriage, just thinking, isn't it? Everyone else is the problem. And that's why we blame and judge everyone like the disciples, because we don't see. And Jesus says, this world is so dark that even when the light comes into the world, they're going to try and snuff me out like a candle. Night is coming. When your light,

[12 : 38] Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, the one person who has God's 2020 vision, who can bring you light into this blind and groping world, you will seek to kill him on a cross. And you'll feel absolutely justified in doing it. And we think that 2,000 years ago, that was just gone in the past. But every single day, when I'm not looking for God's glory to be displayed in my life, but I've made it all about me, I'm seeking to snuff Jesus out of my life. Because I'm blind and I need light in my life. Anyone like me?

That's the blind. We then see as this story carries on that Jesus gives sight to the blind. This is beautiful. You see, right after Jesus says, I'm the light of the world, what does he do next? He doesn't say, okay, I just came from the world. He switches right back to the blind guy in front of him. And he does something incredibly weird. He gets some earth from the ground and he spits on it. And he gets on the earth, like creating, just as God created Adam out of earth. Jesus is beginning a recreation process. He's going to give this man new eyes to see. And he spits on the earth. And many scholars believe that just as in the old Testament, if an unclean person spits on somebody, they become unclean. So Jesus, who's the only clean one, when he spits on there, he becomes, that becomes clean and free. And so what he does, he spits, he creates this, puts this mud pack on the guy's eyes and gives him two commands. What are the two commands he gives? Go wash. Go wash in the pool of Siloam. What does the man do? He went and washed. Okay. Think about it. Jesus could have done what he's done in many other places, which is just healed in there and then. Okay. There you go.

Healed. But he doesn't. He doesn't. Which I think is fascinating. I think just, just from what, um, the testimony that was shared earlier, God doesn't always work in exactly the same way with every person. You know that? And sometimes we do start comparing all our experiences with everyone else and saying, oh, I didn't have as great a testimony as that person. And then she says, no, no, no, no.

God works every single person differently because he knows what you need in your life. And so what he does, he, he tells the blind man, go to the pool of Siloam. How is the blind man going to get there?

[15 : 41] Jesus doesn't go with him. So what has he got to do? He's got to kind of walk through the city to try and find this pool. Right? What do you think was going on in his mind while he was going through that?

All he has, the only thing to compel him to go were the two commands of Jesus, go wash. He trusts the word of Jesus to go. And I think as he's going along there, I think he's wondering to himself, ah, okay, uh, am I being stupid? This is crazy. What am I doing? As I'm going, but he trusts Jesus' word.

You know, he's only just met Jesus, but he trusts his word. Takes his step of faith, goes to the pool of Siloam, which Port John points out means sent because the water was sent from outside the city to bring life to those inside the city. Just as Jesus is sent from outside our dark world into, uh, to, into giving us light and life and sight to those who believe and trust his word.

And some of us have been in church a long time and you're still wondering, can I trust Jesus? Is it stupid to trust in somebody that I've never met or I've never seen? And John's point is this, when you take a step of faith out to trust Jesus and trust his word, what is going to happen? He's going to bring you sight in your life. He's going to open your eyes. That's the point. And some of us, Jesus is saying to us right now, will you step out? Don't just sit here and listen. I'm calling you to step out and trust me maybe for the first time in your life. And that's the pattern for the Christian life. Do you see that you're blind? Will you trust Jesus as your light to give you sight and step out in faith to trust and obey him? It's the pattern of the Christian life.

And that's the story. Simple. Very simple. And then John is going to show us there are four different groups of people who show us how we can respond to this. And this is great. I love these four different people because they're exactly the way that we respond today. Okay? Here are the four groups. The skeptical neighbors. Okay? Let's start with them. Skeptical neighbors. Verses 8 to 12. [18:28] Man goes back to his neighborhood where he'd only ever known begging there. Okay? He's only ever been a beggar. And now he goes back and he goes, guys, it's me. I'm back. And what do they do?

They go, is that the guy who used to beg here like every single day for the last 10 years? And they go, oh, I think he is. Maybe he's not. I'm not sure. And they're just talking about him right in front of him. And he's there going, it's me. It's me. It's me. And they go, I'm not really sure.

I mean, how blind are they? Right? They've never seen this guy. Even though they walk past him so many times. So then finally they go, okay, so how are your eyes open? We want some evidence that it's really you. And he says, well, okay, Jesus did this miracle for me. And then they say, where is he? He's like, I don't know. And they're like, not good enough. Sorry.

And that's actually some of us. Because everywhere around you is evidence of God's extraordinary power and grace and glory and the blindness of human beings who need a savior. And yet we keep saying, I need more evidence. And the Christian faith is reasonable and rational and intellectually credible.

I mean, just look at the intricacy of creation. Look at the desire for love and the need for relationships. Look at our desire for justice, morality, our delight in music and art and beauty, that God-shaped hole that every single society throughout every single place in human history has had desiring to worship something. Even in the most atheistic societies, spirituality is flourishing. Why? Why? Because worship is embedded in our souls. It's not just the product of random chemicals hitting each other and then us just working out how to live life. There is evidence around us.

[20:35] Look at the resurrection of Jesus, which changed and started a movement without violence, which has transformed society, changed millions of lives with a love story that is unparalleled in any other story in the whole of history. And yet some of us hide behind there. There's not enough evidence.

And the thing that I think sometimes the issue is, it's not, our problem is not fundamentally intellectual. It's that we're sometimes blinded by our pride, by our certain experiences, by all kinds of things which make us say, I don't even want to look at it.

And Jesus says, and here's the challenge, will you go and examine the evidence for who Jesus really is? Will you truly examine that? That's the skeptical neighbor.

Second group, verse 13 to 17, 24 to 34, it's the self-righteous Pharisees. These are great guys. These are the religious leaders. We often think of them as the bad guys.

But actually, everyone around them would have thought, these are the good guys. These are the great guys. They're intellectuals. They're powerful. They're moral. We talked about them like Nicodemus last week.

[21:58] And they knew that God had commanded his people in the Old Testament, you've got to keep the Sabbath, Saturday. They knew that this was the key sign that whether you were trusting or obeying God is whether you kept the Sabbath.

And so they made really, really sure that they were going to keep the Sabbath. They basically put a fence around it. They defined what work was, so they came up with 39 categories for work.

Okay? So that included carrying, making bread, sowing, reaping. And then they said, anything that looks like any of these things is also work.

So when Jesus starts making mud in the ground like this, they go, that's like making bread. He's working on the Sabbath.

That's why verse 16, they say, this man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath because he's making bread. Now, we think that's strange.

[23 : 06] But Sabbath keeping for them was just their way of them staying in control of their lives. So they felt justified and okay with God because they had made one rule. But they were blind to who Jesus was.

This is, I always get challenged by the Pharisees. Those of us who've been in church a long time, we know how to play the Christian game. We know the right rules. We know the right things to do. You know, we're nice. We give regularly. We serve. We try and be good husbands or spouses. And we think we're okay. And then Jesus comes along.

And what's really interesting, when does Jesus perform this miracle? When? What day? On the Sabbath.

Why does he choose the Sabbath? He could have chosen a Friday. Monday's a good day for a miracle. Why does he choose the Sabbath? Because when Jesus passes by, he's not about affirming your blindness.

[24 : 15] He's not about affirming your sense of, I'm doing okay in the world. He doesn't go to the Pharisees and say, great job, guys. Couple of little tweaks here and there, but you're good to go.

He doesn't do that. Because he's forcing the Pharisees to choose, will you trust me, or will you trust in your own methods for trying to get God's favor and blessing in your life?

Do you want to rely on yourself, or are you going to rely on me? And the thing is, the Pharisees, their whole world, their whole sense of security is right under threat right now.

And Jesus is doing it deliberately. Because Jesus wants not to keep you on the throne of your life. He wants to dethrone us from our lives. He wants to show us that he is the only one we can truly trust in, not in any of our good works or the things that we've done well.

[25 : 17] And that's why, as you think through, the Pharisees are threatened. That's why when the blind man goes through his whole logical argument later on of just saying, listen, this guy must be from God because of all the stuff he's done.

And the Pharisees are going, you're born in utter sin. How dare you teach us? Because they're under threat. Let me ask you, are you ever, do you ever feel threatened by Jesus?

Does following Jesus ever scare you? Because if it doesn't at any point in your life and you've been in church a while, let me tell you, you probably are not seeing Jesus as he wants you to see him. Because when he comes, he comes to dethrone us and our ways of trying to save ourselves so that we lean on him utterly. And sometimes that's scary.

Sometimes that's scary. And that means he's calling us to trust him. You know, for some of us, it's like you're dating that non-Christian girl or guy and you know that's not healthy spiritually.

[26 : 26] And Jesus says, he comes to you and says, will you hear my word? Trust me by stepping out of that. And we blindly say, yeah, but I read my Bible every day. I just want to keep this.

Right? We think we're okay because we're doing certain things, but we don't see where he's calling me to trust him. C.S. Lewis said this, Christ says, give me all.

I don't so much want your time, so much of your money, so much of your work. I want you. I've not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it.

No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked, the whole outfit.

I will give you a new self instead. In fact, love this, I will give you myself. love. My own will shall become yours.

[27 : 33] To the Pharisee, when you meet with Jesus, he wants to dethrone you so he can give you life and see what it means to trust you. And if that doesn't scare you a little bit and say, God, help me, then maybe you haven't seen Jesus.

Maybe you haven't seen him, but he wants you to find sight in him. Skeptics, self-reliant Pharisees. Third group, the fearful parents, 18 to 23.

I've so much sympathy for these parents. They've lived with a blind, shamed son for all of their lives. They've experienced the judging looks from people like the disciples who've just always looked down on them and seen it as their fault that he's blind.

And they long to be accepted in the community. Don't we sometimes want that? And some of you have experienced the pain of having children who have sicknesses, disabilities, being treated

differently from others.

And sometimes you just want a sense of normality. I think that's what the parents wanted. And they know that their son is healed, but they also know the cost of what it would take to admit that Jesus was the one who did it.

[28 : 59] You know, it says, they feared the Jews because they could be thrown out of the community. I mean, in churches, sometimes if there's a very serious church discipline issue, a member might be asked to leave the church, but then they can go to a hundred other churches.

But here, if they get thrown out of the synagogue, they're thrown out of the community. That's been like defriended from Facebook, like your colleagues not talking to you.

You're not invited to anything at Chinese New Year. It's like you're on your own. That's serious. And they're afraid. Do you get them?

I get that. You know, some of you in your high school or in your office, and you're afraid that if you really stand up for Jesus, really tell someone about Jesus, what's going to happen?

What are they going to think about me? Am I going to get thrown out, excluded? There is a cost. And so they're afraid.

[30 : 06] But I think what John is doing in writing about them, he wants to show you, not to condemn the parents, but I think he wants to show you how amazing the blind man's faith is.

So we've had the skeptics, the self-reliant, the fearful, and now you have the worshipping blind man. This is great. I love this guy. He's just cool.

I think he's British because he's very sarcastic. But once Jesus has touched him, this guy, his faith just begins to grow exponentially.

Verse 11, and again, you see, everyone's journey in faith is different. Nicodemus, he's like, clever, intellectual, takes like ages to get it. Okay?

But he does get it eventually. This guy, he's like, he's on fire. I mean, verse 11, he calls Jesus, he's the man. He's a man. He's just a man. Okay? Verse 17, when questioned again about Jesus, he says, he's a prophet.

[31 : 09] Verse 33, he says, if this man were not from God, he could do nothing. And then finally, in verse 38, just in one chapter, okay, he falls down before Jesus and says, Lord, I believe.

And he worships him. Do you see the progression of faith? This, and, this is amazing.

The word for worship there in John is only ever used for God. So what is he doing? He's recognizing. John is showing you, it doesn't matter where you are in your faith journey, where I want to take you every single day is from seeing Jesus just as a man, just as a prophet, to seeing that he's truly God and worshipping him.

That's where God is trying to take you every single day. And, and this uneducated beggar, okay, he's before, like, imagine, he's before the greatest minds that they had around in the society.

These guys are smart. They say to him, okay, this man was born in sin. This Jesus is a sinner. What do you say about him? I mean, that's pretty intimidating, okay?

[32 : 24] You've never been to school. Guys, really smart. Have you ever had that? You know, you have these guys who've got amazing intellectual arguments. They come at you and you feel like, I'm trying to talk about Jesus but I don't really know how to say it.

Anyone been there? Anyone felt intimidated? I, I love this because this guy, he's not the brightest of the bunch but because he has a testimony, look at this, he says, whether he's a sinner or not, I do not know.

Listen, you guys are way smarter than me. I'm just a simple guy from the streets but one thing I do know, though I was blind, now I see.

You see, you may not have all the arguments. Some of you will be great at apologetics and defending the faith but some of us, many of us will be like, hey, that's just way over my head but every single one of us, if you are a Christian, you have a testimony to tell and that is powerful. You don't need, some of us hold back from sharing our faith because we think we haven't got enough knowledge, we haven't studied the Bible enough, we haven't been to enough classes and listen, this blind man, he hasn't done any of those things but he's got a testimony to tell and so have you if you come to faith in Christ and sometimes when we're afraid and we see others who intimidate us, whether it's in our workplace or our friends and that fear of others blinds us and it will, we just come back and say, Jesus, open my eyes to see you again, open my eyes and you see that blind man, he's just had the opportunity to escape the shame of his blindness like a man who's lived

with the shame of being unemployed for years and now he finally gets a job, he can leave the shame behind, he can find a place in the community and he's willing to give that up because he sees Jesus.

[34 : 39] He's extraordinary. He knew the very community that his parents longed to belong to was not one that could ever give him sight. Only Jesus could because only Jesus saw him and loved him and healed him and the blind man gets thrown out.

when he is thrown out and you know there is sometimes a cost to following Christ, who comes to find him?

Who comes to find him? It says, Jesus heard they cast him out and having found him, he came to him. It's Jesus who comes to find him.

Just wherever you are right now, some of you have been seeking to follow Christ, you've struggled with loved ones, you feel alone in many ways. The amazing thing is Jesus always takes the initiative.

He sees you and he comes to you. He knows following Jesus is costly because he paid the greatest cost for us.

[35 : 49] the only one who has ever seen truly blind people like you and me. He's seen the depths of your heart and my heart and he still loved us enough to go to the cross to face the greatest agony for you and for me.

For my sinfulness, for my blindness, which every day I keep being blind in so many areas. And yet he did that for you because he wants to bring you sight so you may see God, you may see his glory, you may see his beauty, and you may see his purpose in your life.

So the only way you can see Jesus is if you realize you're blind. If you realize you're blind and you need him to open your eyes today.

fall and worship him. He doesn't, Jesus is not just a man. He's not just a prophet. He's the one who's worthy of your worship today.

And when you worship him and you're tempted to judge everybody else, you've been hurt by your coworkers, your friends, your church family. You've got resentment.

[37 : 10] Instead of saying, ah, it's their fault. You can turn to Jesus and say, open my eyes to see you. What would it mean for me to display your glory and your beauty in this situation?

Because it's not about me, it's about you. Open my eyes to see you. Open my eyes. The blindest people are those who don't think they're blind. So are you skeptical, fearful, self-reliant, feeling alone?

Jesus comes to you today. We're going to take communion in a second. But I want you just to stop and to think about this.

As a communist steward, I want to invite you to come forward. Where am I blind? Do I see Jesus right with whatever's going on in my life right now?

Where am I blind? Where do I need his light? Where do I need to worship him? Just close your eyes now and just respond to him now.

[38 : 23] Respond to him. As you just think about where you're up to with Christ, ask him now to open your eyes to see him, to see your need of him and to realize as we come to take communion, communion.

Communion is the time where Christ, the only one who saw truly, who sees what you're like, yet he went to the cross for you, that you would be able to see him again and see the glory of God.

maybe you need to just confess where you're blind. If you're not a believer, we ask you not to come up and take the communion elements, but just to think about, am I really blind?

What are the things that I don't see in my life? Do I really see God? Do I really see Jesus? But once you've just thought about this, if you are a believer, respond to see the one who is not just a man, not just a prophet, but the one who's worthy of all worship in whatever circumstance.

And then come up and take communion and we'll take it back to your seats and we'll take the communion elements together. Thank you