



A Post Tenebras Lux Sunday Sermon...

Saved From the Blindness of Sin...

John 9:1-38

^{ESV} **John 9:1**...As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰ So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now

see?" ²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹ But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²² (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵ He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶ They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷ He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸ And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰ The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴ They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." ³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

It's a figure of speech we use all the time: **"Oh, now I see"** or **"You've really opened my eyes"** or **"It's so clear to me now"** or **"Once I was blind but now I see."** What we mean, of course, is **"Now, I understand."**

Almost every use of this particular metaphor goes back to the passage we are looking at this morning. Sometimes truth breaks in on us with such extraordinary clarity that it shocks us. Our lives are absolutely transformed by the new thing we have learned. Sometimes, of course, what we think is truth

breaks in on us and though it seems crystal clear, but we still manage to get it all wrong. When that happens, it can be pretty funny.

When I was in Bible College, I drove a 1964 Rambler. It was a pitiful car. I paid \$50 for it. It has no seat covers and it almost had no floorboard. My kids loved to ride in it because it was so scary. They could see the pavement through the floorboard when we were going down the road. Anyway, one afternoon I was going to class after I got off work and I ran out of gas on the way to school. I called Beverly to come and get me and she agreed to do so even though she was baby-sitting 8 or 9 kids.

The car she drove was just about as bad as mine. It had a loose header cloth that hung down about a foot from the roof of the car. It rested on top of your head when you were riding in it. Anyway, a policeman pulled up behind me while I was waiting. He was very kind. He asked me what the problem was and I told him. I also told him that my wife was coming bringing me some gas. While we were waiting, he noticed that my license plate had expired and pulled out his book to write me a ticket. I pointed out that my inspection sticker was also expired and that he might as well write me up on that too.

Well just about that time, Beverly pulled up with a carload of kids. The officer looked back at the pitiful car she was driving and at the sagging header cloth resting on her and the kid's heads. Now, it was just providential that most of the kids in the car had red hair like Beverly's. He looked at me and then he looked at her and then the kids and then he looked at me and asked, "**Your wife?**" I nodded that yes, indeed, it was my wife and then he turned to me and said,

“Son, I’m not gonna write you a ticket. You already got more problems than you know.” He drove off shaking his head.

Of course sometimes people have bursts of insight, which are wrong, and they are not nearly so funny.

At the beginning of the Civil War one southern lady wrote in her journal that the Northern newspapers told vicious lies about the South.

The Northern papers say ...that we tie prisoners to a tree and bayonet them. In other words, we are savages. It ought to teach us not to credit what our papers say of them. It is so absurd ... We are absolutely treating their prisoners as well as our own men: ... I am going to the hospitals for the enemy's sick and wounded in order to see for myself.

At the end of the war, after she had learned about Andersonville Prison, she wrote: **God help us all if the Yankees ever find out about Andersonville.**

Sometimes you can look the truth right in the face and miss it. And there is some of that in our passage this morning. Sometimes the truth can be all around you and you can still be completely oblivious to it. There is some of that in our passage as well. But in case we get bogged down in the passage this morning, I want to tell you up front what the truth was that confronted the people in our story. The Lord Jesus Himself had already revealed it in chapter 8. He said there:

^{ESV} **John 8:12...** Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

He even repeated the same thought in chapter 9. There he said:

^{ESV} **John 9:5... As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."**

The point of the story we're looking at this morning is that Jesus is indeed the light of the world and that believing in Him will save us from the blindness of our own sin. Try to keep that in mind as we look at the passage and I think it will help.

Now, as I've already said, in the preceding chapter Jesus had announced that He was the light of the world and it had made the Pharisees furious. They had asked Him point blank, **"Don't you realize we are children of Abraham?"** It was their way of saying, **"You don't think we are spiritually blind too do you?"** And He had answered them point blank, **"No, you are children of the devil. If you were children of Abraham, you would believe in me just as Abraham did."** It was His way of saying, **"Yes, you are blind as you can be."**

They had taken up stones to kill Him for that, both for what He had said about Himself and especially for what He had said about them. Certainly, the argument must have concerned the disciples. I can imagine the tense conversation as they walked slowly through the temple compound. But as they walked along, they happened upon a man born blind. They had been trying to put it all together. They knew that spiritual blindness was sin. Jesus had said so many times. But now looking at the beggar, they were trying to understand something of the nature of physical blindness and its relationship to sin. We know that because one of the disciples asked Him straight-out about the blind beggar they had come across.

^{ESV} **John 9:2...** And his disciples asked him, "**Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?**"

It was a great question. It's a question that pops into our own minds whenever things go wrong. Why did this happen to me? What did I do to deserve this? I have asked myself the same question many times. And Jesus answered their question but His answer was not what the disciples expected.

^{ESV} **John 9:3...** Jesus answered, "**It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.**"

Jesus did not stop to develop His answer. If it had been any one else in the world, they would have stopped and given some lengthy discussion on the nature of sin and the reasons for suffering. But Jesus didn't do that, instead He gave a two-sentence explanation and then He spat on the ground.

^{ESV} **John 9:5...** **As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.**" ⁶ Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "**Go, wash in the pool of Siloam**" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

Now, I must admit, I think that this is one of the most extraordinary scenes anywhere in the Bible. It is absolutely unexpected. It was so different from anything Jesus had ever done, that it makes you wonder why He did it. There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus could have just spoken the word and healed the blind man straightway. But instead He spat on the ground and bent down and made clay out of the soil and the spit. When He had made the clay, He stood up and applied the clay to the man's eyes.

Now, there is something about this scene that offends those of finer sensibilities. But that has always been the way of Christianity. It is a religion based upon blood and death. It speaks of sin and corruption and blood and redemption. It speaks of water and of wine and bread. It is common in all of its elements, all except for the person of Jesus. He is what makes these things holy. He sanctifies all these things. It is His blood that saves us. The water we use speaks of the cleansing He provided and the bread and the wine remind us of His death on our behalf.

Still, scholars have struggled to understand why our Savior spat on the ground and made clay to anoint the man's eyes. It may have been that Jesus was trying to explain His power as the Creator of all things. This forming something out of clay doubtlessly caused many Old Testament passages to spring to their minds. They would have thought of passages like:

^{NIV} **Genesis 2:7**...the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Or:

^{NIV} **Job 10:9**...Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?

Or:

^{NIV} **Psalms 103:14**...for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

Jesus may have been demonstrating His power as the Creator of all things. He may have been showing both His disciples and us that He could create this man eyes out of the very dust that He had first used to create man.

Or He may have been demonstrating His ability to restore spiritual light where the darkness of sin had snuffed it out. If that is the sense, then Jeremiah 18 may be especially helpful in understanding what Jesus was doing:

^{NIV} **Jeremiah 18:2...** "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." ³ So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

Restoration, renewal, recreation are all synonyms for something that we as Christians know something about. There is not a one of us that has not been delivered from the blindness of our own sin? And it was not a deliverance that we helped along. We were blind to our separation from God; we were blind to the seriousness of our own sin. But God reached down from heaven in kindness and regenerated us. He gave us new spiritual sight and new spiritual life. He remade us as a potter does a damaged pot. That is what was happening here. This man's eyes were being restored but even more than that he was being given spiritual eyes to see the truth. And what truth was that? It was the truth that Jesus is the light of the world.

And that is the direction the story turns in verse 7.

^{ESV} **John 9:7...** and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who

used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some said, **"It is he."** Others said, **"No, but he is like him."** He kept saying, **"I am the man."**

I love this part of the passage. The man went and washed in the pool of Siloam and he came back seeing. And just as soon as he returned questions began to spring up.

"Isn't that the blind beggar that used to sit in the gate?"

"I think it is."

"No, that's not him; that man can see."

"No, I think it is."

"Don't be ridiculous. That beggar was born blind. Whoever heard of someone that was born blind regaining their sight?"

I love all that dialogue. But I particularly love the blind man's response. The text says: **"He kept saying, 'I am the one.'"**

The phrase emphasizes the repetitive nature of his response. He kept repeating himself, **"Yes, I am the man. Yes I was born blind. Yes, I can see. Yes, I used to sit right over there. So, that's what my spot looked like. Yes, yes, I am the man."**

Pretty soon there was a crowd and with the crowd also came the Pharisees still pouting from their last conversation with Jesus. But even they were divided.

Look at verse 15.

^{ESV} **John 9:15...** So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "**He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.**" ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "**This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.**" But others said, "**How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?**" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "**What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?**" He said, "**He is a prophet.**"

I can imagine that the man who had been born blind reveled in the argument going on around him. He had heard them fight many times as he begged for alms but now he was watching them. He was watching them with his own perfectly good eyes.

One man shouted, "**This Jesus is a Sabbath breaker.**"

Another man asked, "**How could such a sinner do these things?**"

Finally, they asked the man born blind his opinion, "**What do you say?**"

I love his answer. "**He is a prophet. No doubt about it.**"

But the Pharisees hated his answer. So they wanted to talk to his parents. The refused to believe it was true. So they asked them:

"Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?"

Notice how deviously they question the truthfulness of the man's parents. The parents knew what they were doing and were terrified and they were torn on just how to answer. If they said yes they would make the Pharisees mad; if they said no it would seem like they were ungrateful to Jesus. So they tried to steer a middle course.

^{ESV} **John 9:20...** His parents answered, "**We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.**" ²¹ **But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.**" ²² (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.)

So the Pharisees turned on the man who had been blind all over again.

^{ESV} **John 9:24...** So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "**Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.**"

Now, I don't want you to misunderstand the nature of their command to the man born blind. They weren't saying, "**Give glory to God for what He has done in your life?**" They weren't even saying, "**Give glory to God but don't praise Jesus?**" I think D.A. Carson is right. They were saying, "**Give glory to God. Own up to the truth. Admit that the man is a sinner.**"

Now what is remarkable about the irony of this passage is that he did exactly what they asked. He honored God by his response. On the other hand they did exactly the opposite of what they asked him to do. They wanted him to admit the truth, which he did. They, on the other hand, rejected the truth, which was especially obvious to the man who had been born blind.

You can see a conflict was coming.

ESV John 9:25...He answered, "**Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.**"

The Pharisees were growing weary with the man born blind, so they decided to get straight to the point.

ESV John 9:26...They said to him, "**What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?**"

From this point on the gloves were off. He began to mock them. He was saying, "**I've gone over it and over it again but you did not listen. You don't intend to listen, so why do you want to hear it again? You don't have any desire to become one of His disciples like I have, do you? No, of course, I can see that you don't.**" I think it interesting that the man was already identifying himself with Jesus. A moment ago, he had considered Jesus a prophet; now, he considered Him someone to follow. It is something the Pharisees picked right up on but they did so with great sarcasm.

ESV John 9:28...And they reviled him, saying, "**You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.**"

They deemed themselves to be Moses' disciples. They liked the law or at least they liked the law as they interpreted it. They did not like Jesus. He always kept them off balanced. He pointed out their failures and they could not forgive Him for that. And by now the man born blind was beginning to see their extraordinary spiritual blindness. He was also getting tired of their constant

attacks on Jesus. He now not only felt the need to point out their blindness but to speak up for the wonderful person, a person he had not yet seen, Who had healed his blindness. But he was about to get himself in deep trouble.

^{ESV} John 9:30...The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

I want you to see once more the progression of this man's thinking. First, it was, **"He's a prophet."**

Then it was, **"He is someone worth following."**

Here it was, **"He's from God, no doubt about it."**

As far as the Pharisees were concerned, this last bit of insight on the part of the man born blind was the final insult.

^{ESV} John 9:34...They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out."

They cut him off from their fellowship. They cast him out. And the manner in which they cast him out is particularly cruel. They alluded back to his blindness. They pointed out that his blindness was the result of his extraordinary sinfulness. He had been steeped in blindness. It had served him right to miss the

truth. There is, of course, the one extraordinarily ironic part of their question that they should have stayed to have answered.

They had asked, **"...and are you teaching us?"**

If they had stayed just a few more minutes he could have taught them something really important. He could have taught the only appropriate way to respond to Jesus.

Look at verse 35.

It was a voice he recognized immediately. He had been cast out and he was alone. But he could still see. And then, as I said, there was this voice and now there was face attached to it. It asked a simple question. There was no sarcasm or hatefulness. There was only the face and the gentle voice attached to it.

^{ESV} John 9:35..."Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

The man who had been born blind answered as graciously as he had been asked.

^{ESV} John 9:36..."And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"

I love Jesus' answer.

^{ESV} John 9:37..."You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you."

Jesus put His answer in the clearest of terms, **“You have already seen me with the eyes of your heart. You see me now with the eyes I gave you. You know who I am.”**

^{ESV} **John 9:38**...He said, **"Lord, I believe,"** and he worshiped him.

It is the final step in the progression of the man's sight. To him Jesus had gone from being a prophet, to a worthy master, to an emissary from God, to God Himself.

And so this morning it is the same for us.

We too were blind to our sin. We were blind to our alienation before God. But Jesus broke through all that. He not only showed us that we were enemies but He also showed us that He had reconciled us to God. He took our sin upon Himself and made peace between God and us. His blood covered our sin. And now we can see it so clearly. It is like we were blind but now we see. That is why we worship Him. That is why we long to come Sunday after Sunday and commune with Him. We see Him there in the wine and the bread. We see Him in the water. We see Him in the redeemed faces of those with whom we worship. We hear Him in the hymns and in the prayers and in Holy Scripture and even in the miry clay of a poorly crafted sermon.

That is why we worship and that is why, Brothers and Sisters, I can give you a word from the Lord this morning. If you have put your hope in Him, if you are trusting Him as the author and finisher of your faith, it is well with your soul. He has removed the veil of sin covering your eyes. He has removed the veil of sin

covering your heart. He has lifted you out of the miry clay and set your feet upon solid foundation. As you sing and as you go from this place remember this and rejoice, Brothers and Sisters. You have been saved from the blindness of sin.

Let's pray.