

The Blind Man's Testimony about Christ

John 9:1-39

The Gospel of John Sermon Series

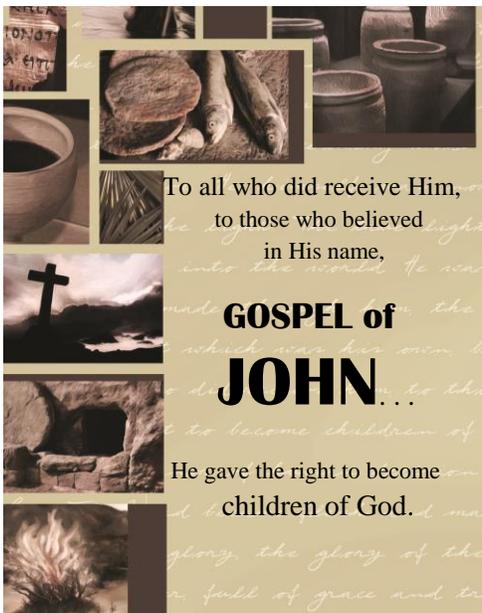
Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

March 30, 2014

TEXT: John 9:1-39

We're looking through the Gospel of John at a set of testimonies about Jesus. Each portion of the Gospel of John is like the whole in miniature, a complete testimony about who Jesus is. This



is again the case this morning. We heard a set of very clear testimonies along the way: testimony from John the Evangelist, that in the beginning was the Word; we heard Mary's testimony, to do whatever He tells you; we heard John the Baptist's testimony, that He must increase, I must decrease: we heard the testimony of God the Father, this is my beloved Son. Last Sunday, things got a little muddled and confused as we listened to the conflicting, swirling testimony of the crowds, and yet those crowds shared that they were all interested in talking about Jesus.

This morning, we shift again to another individual testimony. The crowd focuses in and becomes singular, an individual person in the midst of this crowd. We see a

single man who in the course of this chapter moves into a progressive faith in Jesus Christ. We

see in his testimony that coming to believe in Jesus is a process and not something that happens all at once. It has a lot in common with the woman at the well. The setting of this passage is again the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus has left the confines of the Temple Mount. The southwest corner of the Temple Mount has a huge,



monumental staircase that leads down from the Temple area, and it ultimately ends in the Pool of Siloam. When Jesus leaves the Temple, He comes down this beautiful, covered colonnade on the left side to the staircase where you exit the Temple Mount. This is much larger than you

think; 200,000 people can fit on the platform area. Jesus exits temple and starts to walk down this staircase, and John 9:1 says:

"As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth."

Jesus' disciples asked Him a painful question in John 9:2:

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind."

I want you to notice, first of all, in John 9, that Jesus notices hurting people. He sees a man in the midst of a crowd. For the pilgrimage Festival of Tabernacles, there would be two million people swirling around, and yet Jesus notices this one man. As we move through this life, we are called in Christ to notice hurting people. A wise pastor once said: "If those who preach and teach could actually see into the hearts of the people sitting before them, people who from the outside look all right, they would break down and bawl." There is great pain in lives right around us, and Jesus notices this man. His disciples wonder where the sin had happened, and Jesus gives us a very profound perspective on disability and suffering in John 9:3. Jesus says:

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

In other words, Jesus says: "I will not tell you the cause of this man's sickness or weakness, but I will tell you the result." When you see disability, or someone who seems to have less from a human perspective, do you make a judgment that they've done wrong? That's really the karmic view of reality which has nothing in common with Christianity. Jesus says sin is not the issue. Jesus says that this man's being born blind is actually an occasion for the works of God to be manifest in his life. Jesus has a theology of suffering that leads to glory. Jesus has a perspective that our weakness is an occasion for God's glory to be made visible.

I have often noticed, as I'm sure that you have, that people who have grown up with someone who has a physical weakness are often some of the most compassionate and kind people that you will ever meet. Jesus does not say this is a result of sin, but this is an occasion for God to be glorified. In this man's life, it will be through healing. Other times, though, it is not through healing, but it is through a transformation of the hearts of all around that person. Jesus says this man is an occasion for God to be made known. In John 9:4, Jesus looks at the disciples and He says:

"As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent Me."

This is a very dangerous first person-plural. It's terribly threatening because Jesus has said before, repeatedly: "I must do the work of Him who sent Me." What's wrong with John 9:5? Jesus by some apparent slip of the tongue has said: "**We** must do the work of Him who sent Me." That means all of you and all of me, and the posture of the innocent bystander is removed

by the shift from singular to plural. You can no longer sit idly by and just walk right past hurting people. Jesus has eliminated that possibility with the divine efficiency of shifting from first-person singular to first-person plural. When Jesus said **we**, I'm sure the disciples are looking around and thinking: "You mean them, right?" Jesus says we must do the work of the One who sent Him. That means that you, in some profound and mysterious way, have been drafted into divine service in the world; that Jesus will continue to do the works of the Father who sent Him through you and me, the body of Christ, this week, in this part of His world.

Dale Bruner writes in his commentary on John:

"Our lives as Jesus' followers will find the sooner the better we can begin to feel the pulsation of our being in the most exciting world mission of all time in the company of the Greatest Missionary of all time, Jesus Christ Himself . . . Our lives can be as seen from the outside quite mundane and seemingly unspectacular; but if in them we can express our loyalty to God's Son by faithfulness in speech and life with our customers, clients, colleagues, or whomever or whatever else we are given in our day, Jesus promises repeatedly that we will be alive and in mission."

This is where life is to be lived, and it's actually not to be found anywhere else. Isn't that a dangerous first-person plural? That will really mess with your schedule and mine.

Jesus models what He says in a somewhat unexpected way. After this conscripting draft into His service, Jesus spits on the ground. He doesn't ask the man if he believes; He doesn't ask for any preliminary conditions for this healing. He just simply and compassionately goes to work in the man's life. He spits on the ground and rubs the mud on the man's face, and He says in John 9:7:

"Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam."

The man does as Jesus tells him. The Pool of Siloam is at the end of the staircase seen here. The



pool was discovered in a neat moment of modern archaeology. In Israel, if a street is going to be repaved, those digging might stumble upon an archaeological discovery. This is what happened in 2004. As they were redoing the street, the workers came upon these large Herodian stones. They were amazed. They dug further, and there was the Pool of Siloam. Knowing this discovery would

attract hundreds of thousands of visitors, they put in a new drainage pipe up above the Pool of

Siloam to keep it from flooding. This thick black pipe is barely visible in the photo. They have reconstructed this with a very beautiful mural set in front of it, which gives you a sense of the grandeur of this pool. Jesus told the man just to go and wash in the pool. He did so, and when he came up from the water, he was seeing. Sometimes the best way to show your faith in Jesus is to just do what He says. That's Mary's testimony: "Just do what He tells you." This man does what he's told, and people are astonished. They asked him yet what happened to you when he told them in John 9:11:



"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."

This is the antithesis of Julius Caesar's famous line: *Veni, vidi, vici*, "I came, I saw, I conquered." This man says very compactly: "I went, I washed, I saw." It is very different in scale, and yet it's very direct: "I just did what Jesus told me to do, and now I see."

Notice the first of four developments in this man's faith is right here. He just says: "It was the man that they call Jesus." He was brought in and questioned about this, and this is all he knows: the man they call Jesus told me to do this and I did it. We're told this healing took place on the Sabbath. There's controversy. We mentioned a couple of weeks ago that Jesus' activity on the Sabbath shows us His divinity. There is a division among the religious leaders, and so they question this man. They turn to him and say in John 9:17a:

"What have you to say about Him? It was your eyes He opened."

This man has made the journey that the woman at the well made. He steps forward and says in John 9:17b that the man they call Jesus:

"He is a prophet."

He says something complementary, something significant about Jesus, that He is not just any ordinary man, but He is a prophet. This is the same language the woman at the well had used. Notice that the man born blind could have protected himself from hostility if he had replied more guardedly. When asked: "Who healed you?" he could have said: "I don't really know for sure. I'm not trained theologically, but in my humble opinion, and I may be wrong, don't hold this against me, I think He might be a prophet." He doesn't do that. He moves to this second place of a higher opinion of Jesus than that He is a man. He is not just a man, but He is sent by God into the world. He is a prophet. So, the religious leaders question his parents, and in this

questioning of his parents, we find out that there is a great social cost to pay for identifying yourself with Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior. The parents are questioned and they say in John 9:21:

“Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.”

in John 9:22, John tells us the reason that they were so guarded:

“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.”

There was by this point in time a very high cost if someone confessed Jesus as the Messiah: They would be kicked out of the synagogue. When you come to believe in Jesus, sometimes you can lose friendships; sometimes you can lose a social circle that you have depended on. You can't hold onto everything that you have and just add Jesus into the mix. If you do follow Him and there is an initial loss, I promise you, from the Word of God and my own experience, that you will gain so much more than you could ever fear losing. There is a cost, and his parents buckle under this cost.

The religious leaders come a second time to the blind man in John 9:24 and say:

“Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner.”

The blind man replies in John 9:25:

“Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

That's his compact, one sentence testimony: “I was blind and now I see. That's the one thing I know.” If you are struggling to express and articulate your testimony, to have as your great resource of speaking of Christ in the world, try to put it in just one sentence. This man put his testimony in a single sentence: “My testimony is, I was blind and now I see.” John Newton's hymn, *Amazing Grace*, takes up the language of John 9:25:

*“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.”*

Echoing this text, you may say in one sentence: “I was lost, now am found; I was broken, now I'm whole; I was crazy, and now I'm sane; I was self-centered, now I'm God-centered; I was hard, but now I'm tender; I was drunk, now I'm sober. Can you say, in one sentence, what Jesus has done for you? There was an English miner who was converted to Christ, a man who spoke on the level of reality. His life was changed, and his colleagues in the mine noticed this great

change in his behavior. In fact, the change was so great that his colleagues and coworkers started chiding him and making fun of him over lunch. One day, they asked him: "Do you really believe that Jesus changed water into wine?" This English miner said without pausing: "I don't know for sure if Jesus changed water into wine because I wasn't there. But, I do know one thing. In my house, Jesus changed beer into furniture!" Coming to Jesus changed things in my life. Can you say that in one sentence? This man provides a model for us, that Jesus changes us. He steps further forward in John 9:31, and he says:

"We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will."

He says that if this man were not from God, he could do nothing, and he steps further into a confession of who Jesus is. He says Jesus has come from God; and He is sent from God into the world. This man gets thrown out; he gets kicked out of this community. Just as Jesus, at the beginning of this passage, notices the hurting, notice, at the end of this passage, that Jesus finds the rejected. We read in 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?'"

The said in John 9:36:

"Who is He, Sir?" Tell me so that I may believe in Him."

Jesus says in John 9:37, just as He says to the woman at the well, in such a clear and direct way:

"You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the one speaking with you."

The man, who had seen nothing his whole life, now sees Jesus, and Jesus says: "You have seen Him, and in fact, He is the one speaking with you right now." This was the clearest of all possible ways for Jesus to say: "I am the Messiah, the promised Son of Man." This man born blind, who said it was the man Jesus, who is a prophet, who was sent from God, takes this last and climactic step and says in John 9:38:

"Lord, I believe!"

Lord, I believe. I believe in You, and he falls down and worships Jesus. This single man, in the midst of the millions, was noticed by Jesus. Jesus sees him in his pain and heals him; Jesus finds him, upon being rejected, and reveals His glory to him. Do you believe this morning that Jesus has this power today? Do you believe? Are you prepared to believe that the first-person plural **we** is real and that you and I are called to be part of this work, this week, this afternoon, to notice the hurting find the rejected and point them Jesus? Jesus in His glory gives the blind sight.

In the last line of our text, Jesus gives this sobering final sentence in 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.”

Jesus came into this world so that the hurting, the blind, might see, and at the same time, that those who are claiming to see, the proud, the confident, that they might become blinded by the brilliance of Christ. Jesus sees the hurting; he sees the proud. There are two trajectories at the end of this text: the hurting are made whole; the falsely whole are brought low. These trajectories are going on around us all the time, and you'd be tempted to take your stand with those who are at the top. But Jesus is taking His stand at the bottom, and if you follow Him, then you will watch this grand reversal happen over and over again. We see, because Jesus has healed our blindness. It can be the blindness of physical birth; it can be a spiritual blindness, as we seem to be groping in the dark. CS Lewis was asked once: “Why do you believe in Christianity?” Lewis answered that question in this way. He said:

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

Jesus Christ this morning is here to open the eyes of the blind, to bring people to Himself for the first time. That's conversion. He is also able to give new life to those who believe in Him and to send you out, together with Him, on the greatest adventure of all time, to follow Him in noticing the hurting and finding the rejected, and then bringing them to Himself. Shall we do this together?

Let us pray. Precious Lord Jesus, we thank You for this morning. We thank You that You give sight in this passage. We thank you, Lord, that this man who had never seen anything his entire life was allowed to see You. We pray, Lord God, this morning, that You would renew these works and that You would draw us all into Your service. We pray, Lord, that You would give us the courage to believe the **we** in this text. We pray, Father, that You would give us Your eyes to see the hurting; that You would give us Your vision to find the rejected. We pray, Lord, that You would grant to us an experience of Your power in this place, power of conversion and new life in Jesus. Lord, we desire to turn our eyes this morning upon Jesus, to look full in His wonderful face, and that the things of earth would grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.