John 9 – Jesus and the Blind Man

One day during rush hour, the George Shearing (American jazz pianist who had been blind since birth) found himself at a busy Manhattan intersection, waiting for someone to help him across the street.

After waiting for some time, he was finally tapped on the shoulder. Unfortunately, it was another blind man, seeking similar assistance. What did Shearing do? "What could I do?" Shearing later laughed. "I took him across - and it was the biggest thrill of my life!"

- Talk about the blind leading the blind
 - o Have you ever wondered what it's like to be blind from birth?
 - Perhaps even more difficult to imagine is what it must be like to be blind from birth and yet one day be able to see
 - Well, the gospel accounts give us a peek into that world when Jesus heals the blind
 - His healing miracles were an important way in which Jesus substantiated His power and authority
 - Unlike the Aggie faith healer who was renown for his ability to make a blind man lame
- I invite you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of John, Chapter 9

<u>John 9:1</u> \P As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.

<u>John 9:2</u> And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

<u>John 9:3</u> Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

<u>John 9:4</u> "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

John 9:5 "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

- Jesus and the disciples come upon a man who was born blind
 - He had never been able to see
 - And they ask Jesus why this man was born blind
 - And they propose two reasons

- First, they ask if his parents sinned
 - This is according to Exe 34:6-7 which states that God...

...visits the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations

- The second possible reason is even more strange
 - This man's own sin was a possible reason they suggest
 - But he was born blind...before he had any opportunity to sin, right?
 - The Pharisees had taught the idea that a person could have an inclination toward evil evident even in the womb
 - They cite the struggle between Jacob and Esau in the womb in Gen 25
 - An offense in the womb like a strike against the mother could result in God's punishment (birth defect)
 - False teaching
- Jesus dispels both possibilities
 - He declares that this man was created blind by God for the purpose that God may be glorified in him
 - How does a blind man glorify God?
 - o Remember, in our weakness, God is shown strong
 - So his life lived for God despite his handicap will bring God much glory
 - But more specifically, it was always God's plan to bring Jesus into this man's life and heal him
 - o That's the meaning of Jesus' words in verse 4 & 5
 - And by the record of that healing captured here in John 9, the man's life stands eternally as a tribute to God and His glory

- This concept runs completely counter to our modern view of life and health and physical well being
 - We rarely stop to consider that God's plan for our lives almost certainly includes physical ailments and limitations
 - It likely includes sickness, injury or defects of one kind or another
 - And it each case, these ailments are His prerogative
 - And they exist to give opportunity for His glory
 - Do we use them that way?
 - Are we even willing to accept and understand this principle
 - Consider the man born blind
 - He's helpless
 - He has no hope of ever correcting his own condition
 - We often have many choices and options for correcting our physical ailments
 - And we are quick to thank God when we are healed
 - Are we willing to thank God when we aren't?
 - This blind man had no reason to ever expect to receive his sight
 - Only the healing act of the creator Himself could reverse a condition that had existed from birth

<u>John 9:6</u> When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes,

<u>John 9:7</u> and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came *back* seeing.

- So Jesus initiates an act of healing
 - There are several aspects to this story that are unique and intriguing
 - First, the man never requests Jesus' healing

- This is in keeping with God's purpose in bringing this man into the world blind from the beginning
- God purposed to bring about this opportunity for His Son to demonstrate His power through this man's condition
 - So when the appointed time had arrived, the man is healed by Jesus' mercy and grace
 - Nothing the man says or does prompts the Lord's healing
 - o It is solely the grace of God at work
- The second unique aspect of this healing is this is the only healing recorded in scripture where Jesus introduces a physical substance in the healing process
 - He makes clay from dirt and applies it to his eyes
 - This unexpected step has intrigued readers of the gospel since the beginning
 - Was there something supernatural in the substance?
 - o Was there some special message hidden in it?
 - The answer comes later in the story
- Before we read further in the story, it's important that we don't miss the parallel meaning
- in this event
 - Because God orchestrated these events "just so" that we might learn something about our own condition
 - You and I have a lot more in common with this man than you may realize
 - Like him, we were all born blind
 - Surprised?
 - We each had a birth defect
 - When we entered the world, we entered with a fallen nature, a defective spirit

Psa. 51:5 ¶ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

- Our spirit was alienated from God because of sin
 - And we weren't made this way by our parents' sin, but by Adam's sin
 - We inherited this sin nature from Adam and all who descended from him

Rom. 5:12 ¶ Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

- Our sin prevented us from seeing God, much less knowing him in a personal way
 - In fact, the Romans also says that we were born as enemies of God
 - Strange isn't it, that even though the world seems obsessed at times with finding God and all things spiritual
 - o In reality, we are all His enemy and blind to Him
 - Which explains why we end up worshipping gods of our own making
 - Since we don't have access to the one true God, our conscience seeks to fill that void with other gods
 - Gods in the form of other religions, or perhaps gods of the material world like money, power, sex, career, relationships
- o But none of it ever fills a vacuum that only an infinite God can satisfy
 - Our spiritual blindness is similar to the blind man in that way as well
 - There is no solution for our defect to be found among men

- Just like the blind man
 - Look at the man's own testimony later in the chapter in verse 31
 - He had no hope to cure himself
 - And he had no hope that any other man could cure his blindness
 - The only hope for his condition was that his Creator Himself would provide a solution
 - Unless God healed Him, he would remain blind
- And so Jesus, after applying the clay, told the man to go wash in the pool of Siloam
 - o And then the man went and washed, after which he gained his sight
 - Consider this from the perspective of the man himself
 - He never asked to be healed, though he no doubt welcomed it
 - Still, what was he thinking when Jesus applied the clay?
 - No one has mentioned healing him
 - The only thing he heard Jesus say was go and wash in the pool
 - This was not a pool associated with healing...not like the Bethesda pool described in John 5
 - But it was significant
 - This occurs during the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, which the pool of Siloam played a significant function in providing water for the laver in the Temple compound
 - So it would have been a busy, bustling place this week, with priests running to and from the pool to the Temple
 - Jesus selected this pool for maximum exposure
 - o But still, the man had a real choice
 - Why should he do what Jesus said?

- Jesus didn't mention that He intended to perform a healing
 - He merely told the man to walk
 - o A considerable distance down a steep hill
 - o To a fairly insignificant pool in Jerusalem
 - And wash off some mud on his eyes
 - Why do it?
 - o Why do something so foolish?
- Though the word might have seemed foolish to some, nevertheless the man chose to obey the word he heard from Jesus
 - So he went, washed and could see

John 9:8 Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?"

John 9:9 Others were saying, "This is he," *still* others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one."

John 9:10 So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?"

John 9:11 He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight."

John 9:12 They said to him, "Where is He?" He *said, "I do not know."

- The blind man's healing causes a real stir among the people in Jerusalem
 - They are so astonished, they begin to question if it's even the same guy
 - And he's telling them plainly it's him
 - o As they begin to realize what's happened, they ask who healed you?
 - He tells them that Jesus healed him.
 - Of how Jesus gave directions for the healing, and how he listened and obeyed Jesus' words
 - And then finally, he declares I received sight
 - At this, they ask the obvious question...where is this guy?

- And at this point, we discover the reason Jesus used the clay to heal the man
 - The man had been blind when Jesus performed the healing
 - His eyes were healed in the moment, yet he couldn't open them at the time because of the mud holding them shut
 - He goes to the pool to wash, not because the water was special, but because the pool was surrounded by witnesses
 - By the time he could open his eyes, he was a long way from where he met Jesus
 - And he had never set eyes upon his healer
 - In other words, the blind man couldn't identify Jesus even if he were to see Jesus again
 - Truly this man was giving praise to a faceless savior who he knew only by the Savior's words
 - So now when the people ask for proof, the man is without an answer
 - His new found sight continues to puzzle the crowd
 - But if they are to know the truth of what happened, they will likewise have to accept the testimony of this man
 - Jesus cleverly devised a means of healing that left Him in the shadows and placed His word in the front and center
- As you might imagine, this event caught the attention of the religious leaders who were everywhere in Jerusalem in this festival week
 - And they begin their typical inquisition of this man

John 9:13 ¶ They *brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. John 9:14 Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

John 9:15 Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

John 9:16 Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.

John 9:17 So they *said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."

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John 9:18 ¶ The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight,

John 9:19 and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?"

John 9:20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

<u>John 9:21</u> but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself."

<u>John 9:22</u> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

John 9:23 For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

- The Pharisees follow a typical in their approach to a work of God
 - o First, they reject the healing on the basis that it violated the Sabbath
 - Under their manmade rules, no one could perform a healing on the Sabbath since it was considered work
 - So they say the healer couldn't be from God (therefore he must be from Satan) and be a sinner
 - But other Pharisees disputed this finding, since a sinner couldn't have performed a healing
 - o What they're arguing about is really whether God was involved
 - One group says no because He would never be involved in a work on the Sabbath
 - The other group says certainly Jesus was not be a sinner since God would never perform such a work through a sinner
 - So was God involved in this healing or not?
 - Because if God were at the heart of it, then we had better seek out this healer and worship Him
 - But the Pharisees aren't looking for a new god...they already have a god of their own making
 - It was the Law of Moses, and it suited their purposes just fine

- So they move to their next tactic
 - They dispute the man's story
 - He was never blind, they say
 - But his parents testify that their son had been blind
 - But they stop short of making any conclusions about the man who healed their son
 - They were afraid of the Pharisee, because if they accepted their son's testimony concerning Jesus, they would be rejected from the established authorities
 - So they said their son could speak for himself
- Finally, the blind man himself repeats his story for the Pharisees

John 9:24 ¶ So a 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."

John 9:25 He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

John 9:26 So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

John 9:27 He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear *it* again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?"

<u>John 9:28</u> They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

John 9:29 "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from."

<u>John 9:30</u> The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and *yet* He opened my eyes.

<u>John 9:31</u> "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.

<u>John 9:32</u> "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.

John 9:33 "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

John 9:34 They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

- The blind man engages these esteemed religious leaders in something of a debate
 - They want him to maintain that the man who healed him was a sinner, and therefore the healing was not an act of God
 - The man won't give in to their pressure
 - He says several things:
 - First, he says you're not interested in the facts or in knowing the truth
 - They didn't listen to his details the first time
 - And they don't want to listen
 - And then he begins to mock them a little
 - He asks if their true interest was that they wanted to become his disciples (students)
 - This suggestion enrages them
 - For they are already disciples...of Moses, not God
 - Then the man mocks them again
 - He says isn't this an amazing thing
 - You don't know where this healer came from, yet you know He opened the man's eyes
 - Since there had never before been a man cured of blindness from birth, it must have been God
 - o How else could it happen?
- How will we cure our spiritual blindness?
 - If we are blinded to God at birth, what hope do we have to cure our spiritual blindness? To reconcile ourselves to God?
 - Certainly we can't cure ourselves, for if that were possible, there would be no blindness in anyone

- And we can't turn to another man for a cure when he cannot even cure himself
- How are we to be reconciled to a holy and just God who demands perfection as the test for entering His presence?
 - Our sinful fallen nature produces in us sinful thoughts and actions
 - For the Bible says that if we have broken even one of God's laws, we have broken the entire law
 - And all who have sinned have fallen short of the glory of God and must face His wrath
- We face a truly hopeless condition
 - One much like the blind man
 - We cannot hope to face God on our own merits, and yet we cannot repair the defect in us that produced the failure...hopeless
- But then there is Jesus

<u>John 9:35</u> ¶ Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

John 9:36 He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"

John 9:37 Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you."

John 9:38 And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.

John 9:39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."

- The blind man knew that God had brought his healing
 - And he knew that the man through whom God would do this work must be a great men indeed
 - And when Jesus asked him if he believed in the Son of Man, He was asking a very specific question
 - He was asking if this man was waiting expectantly for the savior promised to the Jewish nation
 - The Son of Man was a Messianic term

- A term the Jews used to refers to a coming Savior who would save Israel from its afflictions
- When Jesus posed this question, the blind man said he was ready to receive him, if only he knew who he was
 - To which Jesus responded, I am the Messiah
 - And the man worshipped Him
- In a very real way, we have been posed the very same question
 - o Do you believe in the Son of Man?
 - Do you recognize your own blindness? Do you know that you need to be given new sight?
 - Many people never come to that recognition
 - They live their whole lives following a religious system
 - They trust that system to protect them and assure them a good outcome
 - Or they merely trust themselves...their own goodness
 - Or maybe they just don't give it much thought
 - The Pharisees were such people
 - They wouldn't listen to the testimony of the blind man because they knew better than him
 - They weren't sinners, and therefore they had no need of a Savior
 - And Jesus gave them over to their pride and self-delusion

John 9:40 Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?"

John 9:41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

- These corrupt men could see they thought, and so their blindness remained
- o Don't be like these evil and condemned men

- You have every opportunity that blind man had
 - You have heard the word of Christ, and that word can save you

Rom. 10:17 So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

And these are the words of Jesus recorded in John

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

<u>John 6:38</u> "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

<u>John 6:39</u> "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

John 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

- I was once that blind man, but now by the power of God through faith in Jesus Christ, I see
 - And like that blind man, I come to you now a witness to what He has done for me, declaring Him to you and calling upon you
 - Be reconciled to God
 - Behold His Son , Jesus, who died in your place, that you might live to Him
 - If you know this to be true but yet you have never made you're a public confession, then don't let another day pass without that confession

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

 If you have been given the gift of sight spiritually, yet you have never made that faith known to anyone, then make it know now

<u>Luke 12:8</u> ¶ "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God;

 I will close in prayer to end this service, and during this prayer I will invite anyone who wishes to profess your faith in Jesus