



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA
Richard Cimino
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The Gospel of John

The Blind Man

John 9

In his account of the life of Jesus, John records for us SEVEN MIRACLES. Six of these miracles are not mentioned in the first three Gospels. In recording these miracles John uses the Greek word “sēmeion” (*say-mi'-on*) — which means “SIGN” — because every single miracle that Jesus ever performed was packed with meaning and significance. Each miracle was intended to POINT us to, and TEACH us something about Jesus — His glory and His Divine Nature. These signs also served as catalysts for great teaching moments in the ministry of Jesus. Nicodemus came to Christ because of the signs He had performed (3:2); the healing of the paralytic (5:1-9) led to the discourse in 5:10-47; the feeding of the 5,000 was the basis for the sermon on the Bread of Life in Chapter 6 which included the first of His *I AM* declarations

This morning we come to John 9 and in it we are given the record of the SIXTH SIGN performed by Jesus — The Healing of the Blind Man.

SIDE NOTE — In the four Gospels we find that Jesus performed more miracles in **giving sight to the blind** than any other miracle (11 references in the 4 Gospels to Jesus healing the blind). This is because some 700 years before Jesus, the prophet Isaiah foretold that this particular miracle would be one of the trademarks of the Messiah (Is.35:5; 29:18; 42:7). It's also because this specific miracle reveals Jesus as the one who came to heal those who were spiritually blind — to bring fallen man out of darkness and into the light of God.

*John 1:18 No one has ever **seen** God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

Matthew 4:13-16 And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles — ¹⁶the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I have found this chapter to be absolutely overwhelming and profound in how it captures the PATHOS of the human condition and the MERCY and POWER of Jesus towards a world in the grip of death and darkness.

Every time I stand before you I feel a deep sense of my inadequacy — but this chapter has left me undone. More than ever I pray that for your sake and for His glory, God will overlook my inadequacies.

So I’m going to read the whole story — and make some running comments — that I hope will turn on some light bulbs — and that we will re-visit next week in greater detail.

¹As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰So they said to him, “**Then how were your eyes opened?**” ¹¹He answered, “**The man called Jesus**

INTERESTING — They ask HOW — He answered WHO! Some are interested in the ways of God — HOW God works. Others want to know God — the One who did the work!

made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’

So I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹²They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

Here we see the role of Jesus — and the responsibility of man.

¹³**They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.**

The THEY would be the neighbors and those who had seen him begging

What a weird response to a miracle — you would think they would have been praising God for the miracle — rejoicing with the man or going back into the temple to bring an offering to God.

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.”**

Again — Jesus is the healer — Jesus did the work that only He could do — but the man had to respond — he was the recipient of the miracle because he OBEYED the healer. A wonderful picture of what the New Testament calls the “*obedience of faith*” (*Romans 1:15; 16:26*) and *obeying the Gospel* (*2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17*).

¹⁶Some 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. ¹⁷So 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.”**

The healed man recognizes Jesus as a MAN and as PROPHET

¹⁸The 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 ¹⁹and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? **How** then does he now see?” ²⁰His 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.”

John is going to give the explanation for the parents’ response.

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.) ²³Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴So 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.” ²⁵He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. **One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.**”

Here was a man with virtually ZERO information or understanding. He only knew the WHO and the WHAT in connection with what had just happened to him! But there was one thing that he could not deny — and no one could argue — He had experienced the touch of God upon his life

I DO know that though I was blind, now I see!

²⁶They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷He 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?"**

That would be sarcasm!

²⁸**And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.**

Very real options — Moses or Jesus — Law or Grace. Once again we are tethered to the prologue —

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

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!****

More amazing miraculously receiving his sight

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**

Jesus knows this guy has suffered a tremendous humiliation and loss because of his loyalty to Jesus. Jesus goes to the him! THAT is our Jesus.

he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Son of Man is a term found in Daniel that refers to the Messiah as the King who will come in glory and power and rule the world.

³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”

The man recognizes and believes in Jesus as MAN — PROPHET and MESSIAH.

³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

WHAT was that like? The OUTPOURING of worship and adoration would have been as OVERFLOWING as the revelation was OVERWHELMING!

³⁹Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things,

WOW! They heard Jesus say He was the Son of Man. They heard and saw the man worship Jesus — and saw Jesus receive worship.

and said to him, “Are we also blind?” ⁴¹Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

WE WANT TO REMEMBER THE CONTEXT. The chapter opens by saying

¹As he passed by,

The grammatical structure creates a “relation both in **subject-matter**, in **time**, **place**, **occasion**, and **theme**, with **that** which had **preceded**.”

The

Pulpit Commentary: St. John Vol. II. 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (2). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

This moment was preceded by Feast of Booths (John 7) that included the Illumination of the Temple on the evening of the first day of the feast — commemorating how God manifested Himself to the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness as a Pillar of Fire by night.

This moment was also preceded by the second great **I AM** statement of Jesus in Chapter 8.

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.”

Chapter 8 closed with the Jews wanting to kill Jesus .

John 8:59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

¹As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.

As He was leaving the Temple — Jesus sees by this Blind Man. DON'T MISS THIS — Jesus was deliberate in everything He did — everything He said — everywhere He went. The one who said *I am the Light of the World* deliberately makes his way to a man who from birth had only known darkness — so that He could heal the man and reveal Himself to be the *light of the World!*

John tells us that this man was *blind from birth*

Immediately we are brought face to face with age old question — *Why is there suffering in the world?* Answers of every kind have been given — the most common of which is that suffering is the result of KARMA. Even the monotheistic Jews in the day of Jesus viewed suffering in that light. Listen to the disciples of Jesus.

²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi,

They are addressing Jesus as TEACHER. They want to know the answer to this ancient question.

who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

QUOTE: A Handbook on the Gospel of John — literally “who sinned, this man or his parents, **in order that** he should be born blind?”

Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1993). *A handbook on the Gospel of John*. Helps for translators; UBS handbook series (299). New York: United Bible Societies.

The disciples of Jesus — like most Jews of their day — believed that sin and suffering were intimately connected. In the broadest sense they are absolutely

correct. Suffering and death are directly tied to the fall of man and the entrance of sin into this world, recorded in **Genesis 3**. At the close of the creation account, God looked at the world and said it was *very good*. Since **Genesis 3** forward we cannot look at the world and say — it is *very good*. We can't watch the news at 10:00 and say of the world — it is *very good*. There, in **Genesis 3**, DEATH and SUFFERING were introduced to the world. In the final analysis, *all* physical problems are the result of our fall in Adam. His disobedience brought sin and death into the world (**Rom. 5:12**).

Listen to what the old Anglican bishop, J.C. Ryle had to say on the tragic condition of this man

We should observe, first, in this passage, how much sorrow sin has brought into the world. A sorrowful case is brought before us. We are told of a man "who was blind from his birth." A more serious affliction can hardly be conceived. Of all the bodily crosses that can be laid on man, without taking away life, none perhaps is greater than the loss of sight. It cuts us off from some of the greatest enjoyments of life. It shuts us up within a narrow world of our own. It makes us painfully helpless and dependent on others. In fact, until men lose their eyesight, they never fully realize its value.

Now blindness, like every other bodily infirmity, is one of the fruits of sin. If Adam had never fallen, we cannot doubt that people would never have been blind, or deaf, or mute. The many ills that flesh is heir to, the countless pains, and diseases, and physical defects to which we are all liable, came in when the curse came upon the earth. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." (Rom. 5:12.)

Let us learn to hate sin with a godly hatred, as the root of more than half of our cares and sorrows. Let us fight against it, mortify it, crucify it, and abhor it both in ourselves and others. There cannot be a clearer proof that man is a fallen creature than the fact that he can love sin and take pleasure in it.

So the disciples' prevailing theology of suffering was correct in understanding the **broad connection** between sin and suffering in the world. **But here is where they went wrong** — They made a giant leap from the **broad and general connection** between sin and suffering in the world — to making a **tight connection** between **the specific sins** and **the specific sufferings of an individual**.

They looked at this man — blind from birth — and they conclude that he was BORN BLIND because his parents sinned in some way that implicated him (perhaps his mother went to a pagan temple while pregnant with him); or because he had actually committed some sin while in his mother's womb.

Their assumptions make the disciples much the same as Job’s “miserable comforters” — who insisted that Job’s suffering was tightly connected to some particular sin he had committed.

³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents,

Jesus is not saying that they are sinless. Certainly both the man and his parents had at some time committed sin. And we cannot deny the fact that some specific illness or suffering *can* be the direct consequence of a specific sin. We have the record of Miriam’s leprosy being the direct consequence of her rebellion (**Numbers 12**). Jesus himself made the direct connection between a man’s paralysis and his sin (**John. 5:14**). Paul made the same connection between sin and suffering and even death in **1 Cor. 11:30**.

Jesus is not saying that they are sinless — He knows every one of their sins! But He is being very clear in saying that their sin was not the cause of the man’s blindness. If all blindness was directly linked to our sin, EVERYONE in this room would be blind and all of our kids would be blind!

So Jesus eliminates that as an explanation — and he then addresses the even harder theological question — *How do we explain birth defects in the light of our belief that God is good?* There is not a parent who has had a child born with a birth defect who hasn’t asked the question — *WHY did God allow my child to be born this way?*

³...“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Some read this as meaning that God purposefully MADE the man blind in his mother’s womb so that God might be glorified in his healing.

Newman and Nida — in their comments on John’s Gospel — a work intended to help Bible translators — give this reading of the Greek text —

*³ “His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or his parents’ sins. **PERIOD** But that God’s power might be seen at work in him, ⁴ we must keep on doing the works of him who sent me as long as it is day.”*

And then they make this comment —

On the basis of the Greek, it is not only grammatically possible to translate in this way; it also suits the context well.

Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1993). *A handbook on the Gospel of John*. Helps for translators; UBS handbook series (299). New York: United Bible Societies.

So — on the one hand Jesus rejects their erroneous belief that the man's blindness **MUST BE** the direct consequence of his parents' sin or his own sin. On the other hand — Jesus makes no judgment as to the reason that the man was born blind.

Some people are sick — or are hurt and suffering — or die — because of someone else's sin — drunk driving

Some children are born sick and suffering — some die — because of their parents' sin — crack babies / fetal alcohol syndrome / AIDS

Some are born sick — some are suffering — some die — because of Adam's sin — genetic birth defects — biological life decaying in a fallen world —

Some are sick and suffering — and we don't know why — like Job.

THIS IS AMAZING! Here is Jesus — *the WORD* become man (John 1:14). Here is Jesus — The very *WISDOM OF GOD* (1 Corinthians 1:24). John tells us that *the Word* of God; *the Wisdom* of God, DOES address their theological error — but He DOES NOT give to them the definitive answer to the theological question of suffering! Instead, Jesus simply says that the man's blindness offers an opportunity to show God's power at work in him, and that Jesus himself has come to reveal that power at work in history.

THEN — Jesus associates **US** with **HIM** in that task committed to him by the Father. Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 9:4). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

LISTEN TO THIS —

Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Jesus DOESN'T give us the answer to the question that has plagued man from the beginning of human history. **THAT** answer is a *secret* — it *belongs to the Lord our God*. Jesus has revealed to us the **WRONG** way to process the question. And **Jesus has revealed** to us the amazing reality that He wants us to be a part of the work God sent Him to do — the work of God in touching lives in a wrecked world.

*But that God's power might be seen at work **in him** (a lost man living and suffering under the curse), ⁴ we must keep on doing the works of him who sent me as long as it is day."*

We need to be on guard against having a wrong attitude and approach to *the secret things*. We want to love and guard the TRUTH. We want to love the Scriptures and hold fast to them. We want to *earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude v3)*. We want to be able to look at our faith and our practice and be able to say, as Peter did on the Day of Pentecost — *"this is that which the Holy Spirit spoke of..."*. But we MUST realize that there are some theological issues that are going to belong to the Lord. And we need to guard against thinking that we have figured out the things that God has not revealed. The theological error of the disciples was that they made a system that drew conclusions that were not revealed by God.

We must also never allow our theological pride to hinder us from the great privilege of being a part of men and women seeing the power of God in the person of Jesus!

We must never allow our theological pride to hinder us from seeing **the pathos of the human condition in this lost world!**

You might be asking — *WHAT do you mean by that?* You might be asking *HOW would that ever happen?* Well let me show you what that looks like right here in **John 9**

¹As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

The disciples regarded this man as an unsolved riddle; but Jesus regarded him as a suffering person needing relief. **Jesus *saw* a man** — the **disciples *asked*** about him. To the **disciples** the blind man was the occasion for ***theological speculation***. To **Jesus** he was a **person** — a **human being** to be ***pitied and needing the healing touch of God***. These guys were like the medieval theologians who argued over how many angels could fit on the head of a pin — while men and women were going to hell! They were moved to **theological controversy** rather than **tenderhearted compassion**.

Imagine the AFFRONT these men (they were definitely Jesus' men) were to this man in his condition!

Here is a man who from his earliest childhood memories only experienced life in utter darkness. Terrified of going to bed at night — hearing sounds but incapable knowing what or who it was. He would have grown up without the simplest of childhood pleasures — and would have experienced the realities of childhood cruelties.

As we read in the account, his parents were devout in their Judaism —they treasured their religious life in the synagogue. This man would have grown up knowing that his mom and dad feared and loved God. He would have known that every time someone looked at him, they would have wondered what sin his mom and dad must have committed for him to be born blind.

As he grew up he would have concluded that he would never marry — never be a dad — never have a career. There was no such thing as **brail** in that day. There was no such thing as the **Jews with Disabilities Acts**.

It was customary in that day for young men to become financially independent and responsible at a very young age. He would have been ashamed that his career would be that of a beggar.

Having resigned himself to a life of begging — discovered that one of the better places to beg was in the Temple precincts (we remember the man lame from birth begging at the Beautiful Gate in **Acts 3**). He also would have discovered that the best day to beg was on the Sabbath — because he knew that as men and women were coming to and going from the Temple they would be prone to act out of religious sympathy (genuine or not). That's why he was begging **on the Sabbath**, and **particularly near** the temple.

It was customary that teachers — rabbis — and their students would be coming and going at the temple. Students gathered there around their rabbis and asked questions — their rabbis gave answers. We remember Jesus

***Luke 2:46** After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.*

AGAIN — *'As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*

He would have HEARD their question!

There he was sitting in the dust of the earth — blind and begging — and these men — probably like many other students who had walked past him with their rabbi — wanted to stop to talk **about** him — not talk **to** him.

IMAGINE the ache of growing up in utter pitch black darkness — IMAGINE the ache of knowing your parents heart ache over you — IMAGINE the ache being reduced to a beggar — and you are treated as a theological problem — puzzle not a person.

Then IMAGINE the ache when countless rabbis — who didn't even know you or your parents — would pontificate and speculate about your darkness and the aching in your heart.

This day in John 9 — and this question by the followers of Jesus — was just another insult added to injury.

They stopped right in front of him and began asking questions about his condition as if he wasn't even there!

We need to be so careful to never reduce the very real ache of a very real and very lost human to a theological issue to be discussed. We must guard against letting their lost condition become a concern merely because of theological or practical considerations. Let's not spend our time talking ABOUT them —

Why all the tattoos? Why all the piercings? I think they are destroying the temple of God!

Why all the cosmetic surgery? How could anyone be so self absorbed and spend all of that money fixing the outward appearances.

How could a boy hold the hand of another boy?

They aren't theological cadavers in a theological lab to be dissected and analyzed! They are humans living in fallen world with out God and having no hope! Let's not spend our time talking ABOUT them — Let's spend time talking TO them! IF we are going spend time talking about them — let's be talking to Jesus about them!

Jesus didn't treat this guy as some theological dilemma!

This rabbi was unlike any that he had ever encountered! Rather than hearing another rabbi speculate about his condition — the blind man sensed this rabbi kneeling down in front of him. With his heightened auditory senses the blind man could hear Jesus spit on the ground — and could hear Jesus hands moving in the dust of the earth.

Then he was startled as Jesus took mud and placed his hands over the blind man's eyes.

The last thing he expected was that Jesus would touch him — or command him to go wash in the pool of Siloam.

EVERY TIME that blind man was treated as a theological lab rat — the object for rabbinical instruction on the relationship between sin and suffering — the ACHE of being a blind man in a fallen world was **exacerbated**. He was **not better** for it — only **bitter** and **more hopeless**. The same is true when Christians look at the lost and only material for theological discussion and debate.

But when he was TOUCHED by Jesus — went to the pool — bent over and filled his hands with water — washed the mud out of his eyes — he was stunned. IMAGINE the TRANSFORMATION of everything he had known about life.

Instead of darkness — everything was light. His whole life he had smelled things — but never saw them. He had touched things but never saw them. He had heard things but never saw them. All of a sudden he was able to connect all of the sounds and all of the smells and all of the shapes with color and shadow and light and movement.

Jesus saw a man — Oh that we would be men and women as Jesus sees them. Oh that we would be seeing the works of God displayed in the lives of lost men and women — see their lives transformed on every level — as this guys was. I'm reminded of my pastor (Chuck Smith) and his wife, Kay. In the 1960's they would go to the Huntington Beach Pier and watch the hippies. Chuck would ask WHY don't they take a bath, get a haircut, get a job? Kay would WEEP! That preceded an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that I believe saved a nation that was ready to implode socially, morally and spiritually. It was such a profound work of God that it was called "The Jesus Movement." There is a reason why it was called "The Jesus Movement." While it was taking place, a lot of people wanted to know HOW so many teens and young adults were getting off drugs. While a lot of people were asking how, there were countless young men and women who could only talk about WHO! All they could talk about was JESUS. And those countless transformed lives became worshippers of Jesus. People could see the reality of their transformed lives as clearly as men and women say the blind man had received his sight. They became a part of the **WE** of **verse 4** — *We must work the works of him who sent me*. Those whose eyes had been opened by Jesus began to serve Jesus and co-labor with Jesus in the work of bringing sight to the spiritually blind world they once lived in.

Next week we will walk through the account again!

But now we want to RESPOND

GIVING — COMMUNION — WORSHIP — PRAYER

Think of the response of this man born blind to Jesus — *LORD I BELIEVE* — and he *WORSHIPPED* Jesus!

Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus. To reach out and touch him, and say that we love him. Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen. Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus.