



John 9

Lent 4, March 15, 2026

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As [Jesus] 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 spit 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. ³⁹ Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that

those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." ⁴⁰ ***Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?"*** ⁴¹ ***Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.***

Let's listen to our first verse again: ***"As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth."***

That seems like a good way to open a story. Establish the characters, provide the backstory, introduce the plot. There's a man, he's blind—blind since birth, even—and then there's Jesus, and we know what Jesus does for blind men. This is going to be a miracle! Jesus will heal, the man will see, the man will praise, and Jesus will continue on His way. But then... then this account does not move on so lickety-split, does it?

Instead, it lingers. It lingers on the man. The way the disciples see him, the way his neighbors see him—or rather, the way no one *really* sees him, except Jesus. Then there's an interrogation; the man can see—why can he see? How can he see? Who caused him to see? The man cannot really explain it, doesn't really understand it, but by the end of the account, the man understands it. At *first*, the man begins to see, and then he proceeds to see things more and more clearly.

This account is not really about the miracle. This account is about seeing. *Really* seeing. And so, our theme today is really very simple:

Jesus Saw a Man

- and then -

A Man Saw Jesus

"As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man..." A simple statement of fact, but *profound*. Think about how hard it is to *see* a person. We see the car, we see the home, we see the toys; we miss the struggles, the depression, the loneliness—we miss the *person*. We see the piercings, the clothes, the looks, but somehow we miss the abuse, the cry for help. Yes, it is hard for us to really *see people*.

The disciples also. They're walking along, they see this man and ask, ***"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*** They don't see a *person*—they see a problem. They *observe* the man, but they don't *see* him. They talk *about* him—they don't talk *with* him. They don't *see* him, they don't *talk* with him, they don't *touch* him, they don't put sandals on his feet, they don't put a piece of bread into his lap, they don't take him by the hand and lead him to Jesus—even though they *know* what Jesus could do for him. They just talk *about* the man while standing *apart* from the man.

But not Jesus. Because Jesus ***"[sees] a man."*** And Jesus sees this man's story as much larger than just his blindness; He sees that this man is a part of *God's* story. The disciples had written in their minds a story about this man that was way too short. Their story of this man began with sin and ended with punishment. ***"Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind [that God would punish him with blindness]?"*** That was all they could see.

And we do that too. The stories we tell of ourselves, that we know of ourselves, involve sin and grace, that we are sinners that have been forgiven, that have been brought near, that have been claimed by God as His dear children. And yet, far too often, the stories we tell about *others*—or rather the stories we concoct about others in our heads—begin with sin and end with punishment. We don't *see* them.

We don't see them as *people*. We don't see them the way *God* sees them. Instead, we see their sin, or we see things about them and *assume* their sin. We *see* them in sin and would *leave* them in their sin. We think that God's grace is sufficient for me, but it is insufficient for *them*. And so, we don't take them by the hand and lead them to Jesus, because we don't see *people*. We see problems and sin.

But thankfully, that is not the way that Jesus sees. Jesus sees the full story. And Jesus knows that the story did not begin with sin. It began with creation. It began with *God's* creative work. And the story doesn't end with punishment. No, in *Him*, the story ends with restoration. It ends with *God's* restorative work. And anything that happens in between—struggle or sin or addiction or prodigal wandering—the Lord can *still* work through. And the Lord *does* work through. And just as Jesus came into a broken creation that He might bring it to life once again; just as He came to you, broken in sin, so that He might bring *you* to life once again; so, He also desires to work with *every* broken sinner that He might bring *them* to life once again.

And so, He tells His disciples: ***"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."*** And then Jesus stops talking *about* this man, and then He gets down in the dirt *with* this man. He spits in the dust, He touches the dust, He forms a paste with the dust and puts it on the man's eyes and then sends him to wash in the pool. Jesus, who had just before this told the Jews, ***"Before Abraham was, I AM,"*** (John 8:58)—He shows us just how far back He goes. He had been there at the original creation, forming man out of the dust of the earth, and now He has entered into that same creation and is using the dust to create once more—creating sight for unseeing eyes.

And we ought to look at Jesus there kneeling in the dust and remind ourselves exactly why it is that Jesus came to work in the dust. ***"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*** (John 3:17) He came to forgive sinners. He came to save sinners. And this is why Jesus stopped for this man, this is why Jesus knelt in the dirt next to this man, because this man was a sinner. And even though the people around that beggar were content to write him off as such, Jesus loved him too much to leave him that way.

And so, Jesus gave the man sight. But that was only the first part of what Jesus would do for the man, that was the *introductory* part. Jesus caused this man to see, *so that* he could see. *Really* see. So that he could see Jesus the way Jesus really is. And I love the story arc of this chapter. It begins with Jesus seeing a man, and it ends with a man seeing Jesus, confessing Jesus. But everything in the middle, the long portion in the middle, everything that leads to this man *really seeing*—it's painful.

Now that this man has been healed, now that he can see, what does he see? He sees that his life is a mess! The people who are passing by, the onlookers, they don't even know if this is him anymore. I doubt most of them ever really *saw* him to be able to know. It *could* be him, it sort of *looks* like him, but they didn't ever really know what he looked like. They'd never given him a minute's thought. Meanwhile he keeps saying, ***"I am the man!"***

Then his parents *disown* him. He is dragged into the synagogue to talk about who it is that healed him on the Sabbath. His parents are asked to verify his identity, "Is this really your son who was born blind?" "Yes," they say. "How can that be?" And his parents say, ***"He is of age; ask Him."*** His own parents won't stick up for him, because they're scared for themselves.

And the Pharisees examine him again and again about what he says about Jesus, so much so that they finally just kick him out. They kick him out of the synagogue with their parting farewell, ***“You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?”*** They were tired of being lectured. But he wasn’t lecturing them! He was just explaining what had happened to him! He was telling his story! He *had* been blind, *Jesus* intervened, and *now* he could see. Now he could *see*. He couldn’t explain how, didn’t know *how*, but he knew it was *Jesus*. And that was all he knew.

But did you notice that over the course of these painful interactions that he’s having with all of these people that he’s seeing for the first time—did you notice how he starts to see Jesus more and more clearly? The first time he tells the story to the onlookers, he describes Jesus as ***“the man called Jesus.”*** The second time, he’s before the Pharisees, and he describes Jesus *not* as ***“the man called Jesus,”*** no, this time he calls him a ***“prophet.”*** The third time he’s brought before those people, this time again he describes Jesus *not* as ***“the man called Jesus,”*** does not call him a ***“prophet,”***—this time, he calls Him one who came ***“from God.”*** And then the last time when Jesus has found him and he’s standing there and he sees Jesus face-to-face, now he says, ***“Lord, I believe.”***

When the disciples had asked about the sin that *must* have left this man blind, Jesus said, ***“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”*** And we might ask, “Displayed for whom?” Whom did Jesus want to see on display the works of God? Yes, the people. Yes, the disciples. But also, the man. Also, this man. Jesus wanted *that man* to see, to see the works of God displayed in him so that he could see Jesus as his Lord in whom he believed.

And every one of us ought to take time to consider the mess of our lives, the mess that our sins have left us in. We ought to consider just how blindly we have ventured through life at times, groping about in the dark, trying to make our own way while deeply entrenched in our sinful passions. And even when we have been there rolling around in the dirt—what did Jesus do? He *saw* you there, and He came down to kneel down next to you in the dust. He came down to reclaim you and to restore you. He came down to capture all your sin and condense it into His death so that He might rise and create life anew. Life for *you*. Because even though people around you might have been content to write you off as a sinner, Jesus loved you too much to leave you that way.

So, He anointed you, not with mud but with water and with the Spirit. He picked you up, a blind beggar, up out of the dust, and He gave you the Kingdom, He gave you *all* the riches of His grace. And *He* caused *you* to see, to see Him as He is—the one who came *not* to condemn you but to save you. And because He came to save you, because He came to forgive you, you will see Him. After your skin has been destroyed, in your flesh, you shall see God, and your eyes shall behold Him. (Job 19:26-27)

And He did all of this *for you*, but He also did it so that ***“the works of God might be displayed in”*** you. And so, this story is not over until you share it, just like this man did. You have a story to tell. And I pray that each one of us would look *particularly* for those individuals that we know we have written off as sinners—and since we can now see clearly, well, maybe that means that we can take them by the hand and lead them to Jesus. May God help us to do so, in Jesus’ saving name. Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) Amen.