

*Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church / April 3, 2022 / Pastor Jeff Harrison*  
The Gifts of Jesus Series  
**The Gift of Sight** (John 9:1-38)

### **Pre-message Announcement**

When I first placed my trust in Jesus, I didn't get baptized. I didn't feel comfortable speaking in front of others, so I kept delaying. Then after a while, I feared that if I got baptized, some might judge me for taking so long. But finally, after much prompting from the Spirit, I got baptized. Afterwards, I wondered, "why did I take so long?"

For there is blessing that comes only when you take your next step of obedience, like publicly declaring your faith in baptism. So if you'd like to get baptized April 24<sup>th</sup>, I, Pastor Dave, or Pastor Manuel would love to talk with you this week. Now let's pray as we come to God's Word...

### **A story reminds that some things are not right in our world**

A few Sundays ago, I shared about how back at the beginning of covid, as we were stuck at home, a neighbor, like an angel sent from God, brought over some live baby caterpillars. A new activity to help us not go completely stir crazy. 😊

Our kids had previously received a butterfly garden as a gift, so we had experience helping caterpillars turn into butterflies. And we still had all the stuff from the butterfly garden, [1<sup>st</sup> pic] pictured here. So we fed the caterpillars, and then over time they formed a few chrysalides on the logs in the mesh habitat.

A few weeks later, a black swallowtail butterfly appeared, then a week later, another one came. [2<sup>nd</sup> pic] Before flying away, each butterfly spent time with Kate. Here's one on Kate's wrist.

Now what I didn't share last time is that one more chrysalis remained in the mesh habitat. For months it never emerged, never becoming a butterfly. Early in covid, this chrysalis became a visual reminder of sorts to me that some things were just not right in our world. That's still true today.

I'm sure you've also heard stories and seen articles about people languishing as they deal with mental health struggles, lost loved ones, disease, inflation, job loss, racism,

addiction, political division, isolation, sleep issues, supply chain problems, war, geopolitics, refugee crises, and more. As much is not right, maybe we're languishing to some degree too.

This morning we'll meet a man aware that much is not right in our world. We'll see this man encounter Jesus and see the difference this can make in our lives today.

## **Orienting to God's Word**

It's in the Gospel of John, chapter 9. So if you've got a Bible or Bible app, open to John, chapter 9. Or you can follow along with the verses on the screen. If you're new to reading the Bible, the big numbers are chapter numbers and the little numbers are verse numbers. The Gospel of John is a biography about Jesus written by John, one of Jesus' closest followers. In John chapter 9, Jesus and His disciples are in the Jewish capital of Jerusalem, where they encounter a man living a hard life.

## **Teaching: The gifts of Jesus to the man born blind**

*The gift of physical sight (1-7)* – Let's meet this man in verse 1 of John chapter 9. **(1-2)**

9 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Here's our man: blind from birth, having to spend his days calling out to passersby, begging for money. He's in a culture where many assume there is always a direct connection between sin and suffering. So many of those the man must beg from judge him, thinking he or his parents must have done something wicked. Even Jesus' disciples share this unfair assumption about the man in verse 2.

As a blind man, he relies more on his sense of hearing, so he probably overhears the disciples' judgmental question: "who sinned, this man or his parents?" It's a question the man born blind may have even wondered himself. Let's see how Jesus answers this painful question in verse 3. **(3-5)**

<sup>3</sup> "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

The disciples didn't ask the best question, but at least they're asking the best Person. Jesus clarifies that neither the man nor his parents sinned in some specific way that resulted

in his blindness. Then Jesus moves the disciples away from their judgmental question to a better focus: how God is currently working in this blind man's life.

So as we suffer, rather than focus on if a specific sin is behind our suffering, let's focus instead as much as we can on how God is working, on what good He wants to accomplish even in our bad situation.

Perhaps God knows that your spiritual well is dry somewhere, and wants to work through your difficulties to help you to dig new wells where His living waters can flow more freely. In this season of loss, of languishing, God wants to help us to get to new levels of trust, obedience, and intimacy with Him.

With the blind man, while it is still day, there is a window of opportunity, and Jesus plans to take advantage of it. The light of the world will do something about the lack of light in the man's eyes. Verse 6: **(6-7a)**

<sup>6</sup> After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. <sup>7</sup> "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent").

At this point, the man born blind doesn't know all that much about Jesus, he's not Jesus' disciple, he can't physically see Jesus, and Jesus starts their encounter not by restoring his sight, but by putting spit-mud on his eyes.

A commentary I read suggested that Jesus may have been mirroring God's work in creation. That as God formed man out of the dust of the ground, so Jesus is forming the man's eyes using the dust of the ground. But even if that's part of what Jesus is doing here, the man born blind probably isn't making that connection.

And even little kids don't like it when you just lick your thumb and try to get something off their face. So I wonder what the blind man feels as Jesus puts this gross spit-mud on his eyes. Does he feel any embarrassment, any doubt about Jesus' purposes, that Jesus' touch has made things worse rather than better?

We don't know exactly what the blind man was thinking, but I do know there have been times when I've felt that Jesus was doing things to me, rather than for me, that Jesus' touch just led to mud on my face. Maybe you feel this way.

With the last chrysalis, after a couple of months, I thought it was time to give up and throw it away. But Stephanie said, “Let’s keep it, sometimes there’s a dormancy period in the chrysalis before it develops into a butterfly.” So I reluctantly agreed with “Science Stephanie” ☺ and we kept the chrysalis. Then many months later, as one untimely born, it finally emerged as a butterfly. All those months, it looked like nothing was happening in the chrysalis, but God was working.

With the man born blind, Jesus invites him to trust that God is working. Despite all his suffering, despite limited information, despite the gross stuff on his face, despite no explicit promise of what will happen if he obeys, despite all this, Jesus now tells the man to go wash in the Pool of Siloam.

So despite all that is happening in your life, is Jesus calling you today to greater trust and obedience? Trust and obedience related in some way to one of your limitations. Or trust and obedience to take a risk and go to a place Jesus is calling you to, when you’d rather to stay where it feels safe.

Like the man born blind, we may have limited information, ongoing hardships, and no explicit promise about what Jesus will do if we obey. Yet Jesus may be saying, “I want you to trust Me. Go where I’m directing you to.” Maybe Jesus has been calling you to trust and obey in some way for a while now. So far, you’ve resisted. I’ve been there.

Now the humble condition of the man born blind may help him to be open to trusting Jesus, even without much to go on. I’m not saying that I’d want to trade places with the blind beggar and I’m not saying that his suffering is good. But in the upside-down way of Jesus’ kingdom, this man’s hardships give him spiritual advantage, and yours can too.

For this is a man aware of his neediness: depending on others to survive as he begs, unable to take care of life himself, and used to depending on things that he cannot see. From this place of need and dependence, this man trusts and obeys Jesus in the middle of verse 7:

So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Imagine now this man, having just washed away the mud, looking at his hands for the first time, marveling at what Jesus has done using the dust of the ground.

Imagine hearing his shouts of joy over the light of the world bringing light to his eyes!

Imagine instead if the man hadn't trusted Jesus: missing out on his physical healing. And missing out on the spiritual healing he needs that can only come through faith in Jesus, the light of the world.

Light dispels darkness. And the light of the world wants to do more than just dispel the darkness in the man's eyes. Jesus wants to disrupt and one day dispel all the darkness in the man's heart and in our world.

I find it thought-provoking that Jesus directed the blind man to wash specifically in the Pool of Siloam. The Pool of Siloam's water came from a spring, so the Jews considered it living water, and it was used in a ceremony during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Not long before Jesus heals the blind man, the Feast of Tabernacles takes place, in John chapter 7. There at the Feast, having seen a religious ceremony where the living water from the Pool of Siloam was used, Jesus then cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

So I think the blind man was sent to wash in the pool of Siloam, a pool of living water, not only to gain his physical sight, but as a visual aide helping him see that he is also receiving spiritual insight as he begins a process of seeing Who Jesus is.

Further, as the author notes here in verse 7 of John 9, the word "Siloam" means "sent." In John chapter 8, Jesus repeatedly says to the people that the Father sent Him. Now here in chapter 9, Jesus tells this man to wash in the "sent" pool.

*The gift of sharing Jesus (8-27)* – Then immediately the man has opportunities to be a "sent" one who tells others about Jesus too. Verse 8: **(8-14)**

<sup>8</sup>His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup>Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup>"How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. <sup>11</sup>He replied, "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." <sup>12</sup>"Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said. <sup>13</sup>They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. <sup>14</sup>Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

The Pharisees are a group of Jewish religious leaders who believe the Jews are currently under Roman occupation because the people aren't following God's Law well enough. So the Pharisees added their own legalistic rules around God's Law and pressured the Jewish people to obey their additional rules, including for Sabbath.

God did command His people to take a weekly Sabbath, a day to focus on worshipping God and resting from labor. But later the Pharisees added a bunch of legalistic rules around what work was forbidden on the Sabbath. Jesus "kneading" the spit and mud and restoring the man's sight were both forbidden on the Sabbath according to the Pharisees.

So rather than rejoice that Jesus has opened the man's eyes, those who know him instead drag the man to the Pharisees for interrogation and a ruling in verse 15. **(15-23)**

<sup>15</sup> Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided. <sup>17</sup> Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." <sup>18</sup> They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. <sup>19</sup> "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" <sup>20</sup> "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

The formerly blind man is in a tough spot as he and his parents are brought in for questioning. His parents are so fearful of the Pharisees that they won't even acknowledge that Jesus is the One Who healed their son. Now the formerly blind man is summoned again for more questioning in verse 24. **(24)**

<sup>24</sup> A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

The Pharisees pressure the formerly blind man to change his story about Jesus. This is no quest for truth, it's a quest to get the man to agree with the Pharisees' anti-Jesus verdict.

Remember, the formerly blind man still hasn't physically seen Jesus, and his encounter with Jesus was brief, and he still doesn't know that much about Jesus. So will he

fold as he experiences all this pressure? Continuing to share about Jesus will come with costs for him. Let's see his response in verse 25. **(25-27)**

<sup>25</sup> He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" <sup>26</sup> Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"

The man bravely withstands the pressure as he boldly shares about Jesus. He is living as one of Siloam, as a "sent" one. We too, are sent ones, so maybe it's time to invite someone to one of our Easter services, or to share about Jesus in a relationship where that feels risky.

*The gift of spiritual insight and worship (28-38)* – Not only does the man born blind share Jesus he also mischievously asks the hardened Pharisees, "Do you want to become his disciples too?" So the Pharisees explode in verse 28. **(28-34)**

<sup>28</sup> Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!" <sup>29</sup> We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. <sup>32</sup> Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

The Old Testament book of Isaiah, which the Pharisees knew well, talks in chapters 29, 35, and 42 about the eyes of the blind being opened. So the Pharisees should have identified the opening of a blind man's eyes as an activity of God's Messiah.

But because of their pride, the Pharisees are spiritually blind to the reality that God's Son has come into the world. The blind Pharisees are only able to hurl insults and cast out the man as they feel threatened by Jesus violating their rules and disgusted that the man has dared to try to teach them.

The man formerly blind, having been given the gift of spiritual insight, sees the irony here. They've been talking about the remarkable, of Jesus opening his eyes. Now the man

observes that what's really remarkable here is how the Pharisees cannot see that Jesus is from God even as Jesus does the miraculous works of God.

What I find remarkable is this man's bold witness for Jesus, even as he is rebuked and ostracized, even though he still has never physically seen Jesus. But that finally changes in verse 35. **(35-38)**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." <sup>37</sup> Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." <sup>38</sup> Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

The man born blind has suffered much, and just now lost his synagogue community. But look at what he has gained in Jesus. Jesus has gifted him with physical sight, witnessing opportunities, spiritual insight, belonging in God's family, and now the chance to worship Jesus as he finally sees him face to face.

### **Next Step**

This morning we've followed the story of a man in need, who then received an invitation from Jesus that made all the difference.

Perhaps, like the blind man, you know things are not right, that you're in need. And Jesus is inviting you this morning to start a life-changing relationship with Him. Like the blind man, you don't have all the information about Jesus, and you can't see Him physically.

You may want to understand everything about Jesus and have a good answer to every question before believing in Jesus. I get that. But it's just not how relationships work. My wife Stephanie and I didn't begin to have all the information about each other when we got married. So it's not about all the information and answers, that's not even possible in a relationship with a person, let alone with God.

What you need to decide, like the blind man, is who can be trusted. Can Jesus be trusted? Jesus came to live a perfect life in your place, on your behalf.

Then in love, Jesus chose the cross, taking the suffering that you deserve for your sins upon Himself. Then Jesus rose from the dead, defeating sin and death, all to make a way to connect you with God and His people and His mission of love forever.



This morning you're invited to place your trust in this Jesus, to start a relationship through faith in Him, and then watch what gifts Jesus brings into your life.

For those who have already trusted in Jesus, we, like the formerly blind man, must continue to answer the question, "Can Jesus really be trusted? Will I trust Him in my hardships, that He is doing things for me, not to me? Will I obey Jesus even when it's risky? Will I take advantage of my opportunities to share Jesus this Easter season?"

As we reflect on these questions, the Worship Team will come up now. They're going to play as we reflect, and then we'll take the Lord's Supper together.

This morning we're going back to the Deacons distributing the bread and cup as the Worship Team plays. If you prefer to use an individual combo bread-cup instead, grab one in the back as the Worship Team plays.

All are invited to the Lord's Supper, but you must respond to God's invitation by trusting that Jesus died and rose to make a place for you at God's supper table. So all who have responded to that invitation through faith in Jesus are welcome to eat the bread and drink the cup when we're led to.

As the Worship Team plays, and the Deacons distribute both the bread and the cup, we focus on the One Who experienced the ultimate darkness to shine on us a light so lovely and life-giving! And then we answer, "will you trust, obey, and share about Jesus?"