

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

March 1, 2026

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Sermon manuscript

Sermon Series: Trustworthy

Opening Eyes, Hearts

(John 7:1--9:41)

Study #6

Introduction: Coming attractions...

Today and next Sunday, we'll explore Jesus' 6th and 7th "**signs.**" All seven of the "**signs**" we find in John's Gospel tell us that Jesus is **[John 20:31]...the Christ, the Son of God.**

In these "**signs**" we learn that He is completely trustworthy.

Then, after we study these final two "**signs,**" we'll take three more Sundays to trace the Lord's final hours on His way to the cross...before we celebrate His resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Easter Sunday will be glorious. So will today be glorious as our focus is on His 6th "**sign**" where we get to see a miracle of sight.

Review...

We ended last week as Jesus challenged His disciples to keep following Him, even if others who had heard hard truth from Him didn't.

He asked the Twelve, **[John 6:67] "You do not want to leave also, do you?"**

¹ All we saw in chapter 6 took place in the Galilee, the northern region of Israel, not in Judea. But **[7:1] After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.**

Thankfully, Simon Peter stepped up to the plate. His answer spoke for the whole group - and for us: **[68] "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. [69] And we have already believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."**¹

From here John walks us through (1). Jesus' appearance at the annual Feast of Tabernacles, (2) a near stoning of a woman who was caught in sin, and (3) a near stoning of Jesus Himself because He claimed to the Light of the world.

Leading up to a "sign"...

FIRST, Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.² He was teaching people at the temple every day about God and His ways.

The leading Jews, who knew that Jesus had not been formally educated, were astounded by His teaching.³

Not that they respected Him or approved of Him. They were confused by Him. There was growing animosity toward Him.

Jesus knew all about this and called them out for trying to kill Him. (v. 19) But they weren't finding any openings to arrest or to kill Him because, as John tells us, **[7:30]...His hour had not yet come.**

While this opposition from the leaders was growing, lots of the people who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast were "**believing in Him**" both because of His teaching and His miracles. (v. 31)

And on the final day of Tabernacles, Jesus invited the crowds that were there - just like He had invited the Samaritan woman - to come to Him and drink.

² During this week-long festival, the Jews celebrated the blessing of God for the harvest, and God's provision during their forty years of wilderness wanderings when they were with Moses after their deliverance from Egypt.

³ Jesus explained that His teaching came straight from God. (7:16)

[John 7:37] If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. [38] The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'

This scene in Jerusalem ended with an argument about who Jesus was. And Nicodemus (the one who came to Jesus for a meeting at night; John 3) went to bat for Jesus, while the rest of the leaders dissed Nicodemus. The opposition grew stronger.

SECOND, Jesus' story continued as He stationed Himself in the Jerusalem temple, yet again.

He was teaching and while He was teaching, some Jewish leaders brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery and threw her onto the ground in front of Jesus.

They demanded that Jesus pass sentence on her.

But the Lord, seeing their incredible hypocrisy (Where was the man?!), knelt down and wrote on the ground with His finger.

After a few moments of that, He stood up and said, ***[8:7] "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."***

With that, the crowds dispersed, leaving Jesus alone with the woman. This scene gives us a beautiful picture of grace. Jesus didn't condemn her, but He did warn her to not continue in her sinful ways.

And THIRD, Jesus once again started teaching, again, in the temple. He told the people, ***[8:12]... "I am the Light of the world; the one who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."***

Just like water was a common way for Jesus to invite people to find fulfillment of their deepest needs in Him, light was a common way for Him to refer to His ministry.⁴

There were mixed responses to His teaching. The Pharisees continued to reject Him (8:13-29), but among the regular Jews, ***[8:30] many came to believe in Him.***

Jesus promised these believing Jews that if they continued to be His disciples, they would know the truth and that His truth would set them free. (v. 32)

But the Jews who had been rejecting Him (the ones He had been talking to in 8:13-29) were still in this crowd.⁵

They denied that they had ever been anything but free. (and we wonder, "*What about Egyptian slavery? What about Babylonian captivity!*") They didn't want anything to do with Jesus. They put their confidence in Abraham.

And when Jesus claimed to have known Abraham (!) and that He was the "***I am***" (the Yahweh of the Old Testament), they picked up stones again to stone Him to death.

On that note, still in Jerusalem, we come to the next-to-the-last "***sign***" of Jesus that John records.

Jesus Healed a Man Born Blind (9:1-7)

Jesus Gave an Explanation to His Disciples (9:1-5)

Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth (v. 1)

[1] As Jesus passed by, He saw a man who had been blind from birth.

⁴ You'll recall that John wrote in his Prologue that the light of the Word shines in the darkness. (John 1:5)

⁵ It can be difficult to identify which "***they***" John is referring to in a given passage. But Bible teacher and author John Niemala offers help here. He points out that

when John referenced a group ("***they***") in a section who have a speaking role, John is typically referring back to the group ("***they***") who last spoke. Thus, what Jesus says in John 8:33 through the end of the chapter was not spoken to believers, but to unbelievers, the same "***they***" He was speaking with in 8:13-30.

This man caught Jesus' attention. He saw a man who had never seen anything. Hearing, taste, touch, and smell were all intact.

But he had never seen the face of his parents or sisters or brothers or friends. He'd never seen a sunset or a nighttime sky. He'd never seen the temple.

Some people who are now blind have lived a life of seeing and become blind through trauma or disease. This man's eyes hadn't worked from the beginning.

Jesus and His disciples passed by this man. The Twelve were intrigued by his sightlessness.

The blind man's blindness prompted a question (vv. 2-3)

[2] And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

By that question, they revealed that they held to a worldview that says that if someone is suffering, someone's sin was the cause. It's a common and a convenient explanation of suffering.

It was not Jesus' worldview.

[3a] Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned nor his parents..."

Jesus wasn't denying that some suffering is the result of sin. It is obvious that some suffering is the consequence of sin, either our own, or the sins of others.

But not all suffering is due to sin. Some suffering is due simply to the brokenness of our world. This blind man's blindness wasn't anybody's fault.

But Jesus' answer turned the conversation away from philosophical speculation and curiosity...to God.

[3b] "...but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

Jesus is just about to bring His power to bear on this man's blindness. He is "***the Light of the world***" (v. 5), and as long as it is "***day***" He's going to keep shining, keep working.

Jesus Gave a Commission to the Blind Man (9:6-7)

Jesus applied mud to the blind man's eyes (v. 6)

[6] When He had said this, He spit on the ground, and made mud from the saliva, and applied the mud to his eyes...

So, what in the world did this blind man think was going on?!

We wonder if he had been the victim of all kinds of attempts at healing. Was he thinking, "*Oh no. Here we go again...*"

But Jesus gave him marching orders.

Jesus told the man to wash in the pool of Siloam (v. 7a)

[7a]... "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam."

And off the man went, stumbling his way to this pool.

As he left Jesus, he was blind. Mud covered his eyes. His walk to the pool was a walk by faith, not sight. It was a walk in the dark. And there was no healing power in the mud or in the pool's water.

But as soon as he dipped his face into the water, washed away the mud, and opened his eyes, for the first time in his life...

Jesus Gave the Priceless Gift of Sight (9:7)

[7b] So he left and washed, and came back seeing.

He had never seen anything before. Now he could see everything. Grass. Trees. Clouds. Faces behind the voices he had always known.

John tells us that he "***came back.***" He returned to the place where he had met Jesus.

But that Voice that told him to wash off the mud wasn't there. Jesus had left the scene. Now, the formerly blind man took center stage.

The first to join him on stage were people who had known him for a long time.

Responses to a Healing (9:8-34)

The Neighbors: "It's hard to say..." (9:8-12)

A case of mistaken identity? (vv. 8-9)

[8] So the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" [9] Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." The man himself kept saying, "I am the one."

This is the silliest confusion scene ever.

Some of them accepted that a miracle had occurred. But others simply could not believe their own senses.

They had watched this man beg on the street corners for years. But now that he sees, rather than embrace the obvious, they figure they must be looking at his non-existent identical twin brother.

Finally, someone had the good sense to ask the man, himself, what happened.

A case of a miraculous healing (vv. 10-12)

[11] He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made mud, and spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went away and washed, and I received sight." [12] They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know."

This man knew full well who was responsible for the healing. It was Jesus.

But he couldn't have identified Jesus if He had been standing in front of Him. He had been blind! And now that he can see, Jesus was nowhere to be found.

Confusion reigned. And, in the middle of all this confusion, some genius suggested, *"Hey, I know. Let's go see the Pharisees!"*

So, off they all went to see the religious heavyweights of the day, the group that was the most resistant to Jesus.

The Pharisees: "Jesus Isn't From God" (9:13-34)

The Pharisees - divided in their opinions about Jesus (vv. 13-17)

The neighbors brought the seeing man to the Pharisees (vv. 13-15)

For at least the second time, the man recounted the story of how he came to see.

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

This meeting with the Pharisees began friendly. The Pharisees were courteous. But things went downhill fast.

Pharisaic differences of opinion (v. 16)

[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 dissension among them.⁶

⁶ No doubt, the man had not been begging on this day, as it was illegal to beg on the Sabbath. Jesus, again, purposefully performed this miracle on the Sabbath - He did so frequently - to expose the hypocrisy and cruel insensitivity of the Pharisees.

What I find most tragic about this exchange among the Pharisees is that none of them stopped to give thanks to God that a man born blind now sees.

Instead, with the formerly blind man standing right there (!), they debated the propriety of Jesus having healed him on the Sabbath.⁷

And - at least as far as the Bible tells us - nobody shouted, "Praise the Lord!" or even "Congratulations!"

The debate about Jesus didn't resolve. So, they asked the guy who had been healed his opinion of the Man who had opened his eyes.

A clear testimony from the healed man (v. 17)

Yes, it was nice of them to include him in the conversation, but it was a no-brainer as to what he would say.

He said, **[17]... "He is a prophet."**

But for the Pharisees, his seeing wasn't their believing. So...they called in the formerly blind man's parents.

Parenthetical: Call in his parents (vv. 18-23)

[18] The Jews then did not believe it about him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, [19] and they questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?"

The first question was easy. "Yes, this is our son."

The second one was tougher. And it is possible that they didn't know how he had received his sight. So, we "get" their response, even though it sounds like they didn't want to answer.

[21] 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."

It didn't just "seem like" they didn't want to answer. They didn't want to answer - and there was a good reason why.

[22] His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already reached the decision that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be excommunicated from the synagogue.

This was serious business.

Excommunication from the synagogue meant that you'd be treated like a leper. You couldn't participate in worship. You were excluded from the social life of the community. And when you died, you would receive a dishonorable funeral.

No way were these parents going to answer that question.

What we have here is a man who was blind and can now see. He was awake to God's power. And there are others who can see but their eyes are closed to God's power.

As the parents move offstage, the focus returns to the man who had been healed. The Pharisees will deal with him one final time.

The hypocritical Pharisees excommunicated the man (vv. 24-34)

A repetition of positions (vv. 24-27)

[24] So for 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."⁸

⁷ Making clay with the dirt and spittle was considered work by the Pharisees. Not that this idea was ever found in God's Law. This ridiculousness was purely an invention of men. God's Laws for the Sabbath were designed to free, not enslave.

⁸ Never mind that they don't really know this. They want the healed man to swear that Jesus was a sinner, or they will have to admit that He has performed a miracle by the power of God.

I think you and I would have liked the formerly blind man. He answered the Pharisees' dissing of Jesus with a dry wit.

[25]... "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

That's a good testimony, right? He just goes back to his own irrefutable, personal experience.

We can see the Pharisees oiling over with frustration.

[26]... "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

The guy is just playing with the Pharisees now.

[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?"

The Pharisees were not amused.

[28] And they reviled him, and said, "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 is from."

Moses had the weight of fifteen hundred years of tradition behind him. Moses was a tried and true commodity. They've got their suspicions of this Jesus.

But now, the man who was formerly blind has had it up to here.

The former blind man preaches. (vv. 30-33)

[30] The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is the amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes!"

[31] "We know that God does not listen to sinners; but if someone is God-fearing and does His will, He listens to him." [32] "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. [33] If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

Or...*"Your unbelief in the face of all this evidence is more of a wonder than is my healing."*

How impressive! This man was speaking to the most powerful men in his world.

A lesser man might have buckled under the pressure and just gone along with the Pharisees - *"Oh, He is certainly a sinner, like you say."*

But now that he had received His sight, he was grateful beyond words and wasn't about to condemn His Benefactor⁹...and the Pharisees weren't about to be lectured by a beggar.

The Pharisees excommunicated the seeing man (v. 34)

[34] They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and yet you are teaching us?" So they put him out.

And with that, the man was summarily tossed out of the synagogue, and from the only community he had ever known.

What a day this guy has had.

At the beginning of this day, he had known his place in society. It wasn't much of a place - He was a blind beggar. But at least that was his place. He fit.

Now, he has no place in his society...and for the first time in his life, he has sight.

⁹ His conclusion was reached by joining together a series of logical propositions, one following on the heels of another. Premise #1 - God doesn't hear sinners, but God-fearers; Premise #2 - God heard Jesus; Conclusion - Jesus must be righteous.

And, no, this is not the end of the story. Jesus made sure of that. The best part of this man's story is that Jesus sought out the man He had healed.

Jesus: Savior, Judge (9:35-41)

Jesus and the Man Who Now Sees (9:35-38)

Jesus sought the seeing man out (v. 35)

[35] Jesus heard that they had put him out; and upon finding him, He said...what? Did He say, "I'm so sorry that you were excommunicated."¹⁰

No. Jesus spoke to the man's most pressing need. **[35]...“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**

Clearly, he was ready to believe, but he had a question of his own for this Man who was speaking to him.

The seeing man asked who the Son of Man was (v. 36)

[36] He answered by saying, “And who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?”

I'm guessing that he recognized Jesus' voice. But he needed confirmation and he wasn't yet very good at putting voices with faces.

Jesus identified Himself as the Son of Man (v. 37)

[37] Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.”

The seeing man believed in and worshiped Jesus (v. 38)

[38] And he said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped Him.

¹⁰ In fact, being put out of the synagogue was the best thing that could have happened to him, because that *putting out* prompted Jesus to *seek him out*.

Jesus removed two blindnesses from this beggar on one day.

His physical blindness had been obvious to the disciples and to everyone else who passed him on the street. Jesus removed that blindness in a way that proved Him to be the Light of the world.

He removed the second blindness, a much more terrible blindness, the instant the man believed. And that is mission: accomplished.

The end of this whole scene (the end of John, chapter 9) shows Jesus back in discussion with the same Pharisees who had opposed Him before (8:13-29; 33-59) and who had just tossed the formerly blind man out of the synagogue. (9:13-34)

They were right there, listening to Jesus and the blind man talk.

Jesus made a comment about His ministry that put those Pharisees on notice, grabbed their attention, and worried them.

Jesus and the Still-Blind Pharisees (9:39-41)

Jesus stated His life purpose, relative to judgment (v. 39)

[39] And Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see; and those who see may become blind.”

Those Pharisees who had been rejecting Him asked Him a very good question.¹¹

The Pharisees asked a good question (40)

[40] Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said to Him, “We are not blind too, are we?”

¹¹ Division is the inevitable result of Christ's coming, His mission, teaching, and miracles. Those who believe, receive eternal life. Those who refuse to believe are judged and condemned.

They assumed that there was nothing wrong with their sight. They were expecting Jesus to say, *“Well, of course, I didn’t mean you. You guys are just fine.”*

Jesus gave them an honest answer (41)

[41] Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, “We see,” your sin remains.”

If they had admitted their spiritual blindness, they would have seen who Jesus was as clearly as the formerly blind beggar had.

But since they claimed that they could see and still wouldn’t believe in Him, they remained in darkness, and in the guilt of their sin.

Conclusion:

All of Jesus’ **“signs”** point to His trustworthiness as **“the Christ, the Son of God”** (John 20:31).

He invites us all to see Him as the trustworthy Savior He is, believe in Him, and receive the free gift of eternal life.

But His **“signs”** also point to His towering love.

This morning, John has given us a front row seat to the ugliness of a loveless religion.

Jesus and His disciples “passed by” the blind man, and the disciples saw an interesting theological topic to explore. (**“Who sinned...?”**)

Religious leaders saw the blind man healed and cared only about their picky Sabbath traditions.

- Jesus was the only One who saw what really mattered: In everything, maximize God’s glory. If possible, meet human need.
- Jesus was the only One who valued the man for the unique image-of-God creation he was.

- Jesus brought healing to his body and wholeness to his spirit. To Jesus, this man was precious.

He values every person - the blind man, you, and everyone you know - for the image-of-God bearers we all are.

In our study of the Gospel of John, we need to remember and notice all of the power and the claims of Jesus. He is the eternal Word of God. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the Bread of Life. He is the Light of the World.

But never forget that Jesus loves you. Yes. Jesus loves you.