

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

Pray: Lord, open our eyes to see wonderful things in your word for us this morning. Challenge us to repent of the things that blind our eyes and steal our focus away from you. Open our eyes to see your blazing glory and to strive daily to lead holy lives – even as you have made us Holy through your death and resurrection on the cross. Amen.

1. The blind man in the gospel reading today had been blind from birth.

That meant he got by each day begging...saying in Greek, "Kyrie Eleison" or "Lord have mercy." He lived day by day in complete darkness – and had done it his whole life.

He was there as Jesus and his disciples walk by that day.

The disciples begin talking about him (not to his face) and asking Jesus the question:

Hey Jesus, who's responsible for this guy's blindness – who sinned? Who messed up? Who should we blame? Was it him or was it his parents?

That was just how people saw things in biblical times – disability or misfortune meant that you or your family had done something wrong. So the disciples were looking to assign blame for the man's blindness.

Jesus responded to his disciples that day saying the man's blindness wasn't the result of any specific sin.

It certainly wasn't God's fault.

It wasn't an opportunity for blame but an opportunity to reveal the glory of God in a person's life.

2. And so even though it's the Sabbath, Jesus spits on the ground, makes mud, rubs it on the guy's eyes and sends him to wash in the Pool of Siloam.

The blind man obeys the commands of Jesus and his physical sight is restored.

It would be wonderful if that was the happy ending – but this passage of scripture is overcrowded with blind people who need help.

John paints the picture like a crime scene from a TV series.

There are the Pharisees doing their investigations, the blind man's parents being interrogated and even the neighbors' and others who had seen him begging get in on the action!

Then there is the blind man who is repeatedly asked the same questions over and over again (like a spot light shining in his newly opened eyes) – *They want him to say Jesus is a sinner.*

- *They want him to set Jesus up for a fall.*
- *And they want to know how he received his sight.*

But they refused to listen to the man or see his perspective.

They were looking for someone to blame...and they had their sights fixed on Jesus.

The Pharisees saw only what they wanted to see.

3. Are you starting to feel sorry for this man who has just had his sight restored?

The neighbors called the Pharisees on him after he was healed, the Pharisees won't believe his testimony and now his parents are about to turn on him!

Listen to this,

"19 "Is this your son?" they [the Pharisees] asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. 21 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." 22 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. 23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

Blinded by their fear of the Pharisees they turn their backs on their own son – **"He's old enough – ask him."** Even his parents are only seeing what's in it for them and hang him out to dry.

The Pharisees thought they had 20/20 vision but were actually spiritually blind. They wouldn't listen and they weren't teachable. *They were blind.*

The healed man's parents were focusing solely on their fear of the Pharisees and their own inconvenience.

They were as blind as the Pharisees.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is in their refusal to see truth.

They dig their heels in saying *"My vision is just fine thank you very much."* That leaves them standing under judgment.

Know that just because we have physical sight - doesn't mean we're not blind to the things of God.

Spiritually blind people see only what they want to see.

That happens in our relationships all the time! When we speak **at** each other saying, "No I don't see what you're talking about – I don't see your point of view!" or, "No I won't listen, I refuse to listen – I don't care what you're saying!"

We're happy to see only what we want to see.

It happens every time we willfully chose to sin instead of listening and obeying Jesus.

We see what we want and go after it with all our might.

We become blinded by desire leaving obedience to Jesus and his word in a trail of dust behind us.

We send ourselves blind through our obedience to sin and our disobedience to Christ.

When we're afraid of severe consequences we stick our head in the sand and pretend we don't know the truth.

We act like little children covering our ears and closing our eyes tightly in the hope that we can avoid the truth.

We leave others high and dry and look out for our own interests - ***That's what the healed man's parents did.***

It's dangerous territory to see the truth – to know it and then choose to ignore it. Whatever the circumstances are!

It affects us and it affects other people too.

It calls for a change of heart. We need to have our eyes opened to see the truth.

4. The man who was healed in this story received his physical sight. But that's not the point of this story.

Two things are happening in this story – while one man is receiving sight, the rest are going blind. It's the healed man who starts to see things through the eyes of faith.

It's a process that starts with the big interrogation and ends in person with Jesus.

- He started off nice and simple – Jesus put mud on his eyes, he washed and could see.
- Then in the midst of interrogation, he confessed Jesus as a prophet.
- Then the Pharisees pushed harder wanting him to deny Jesus and name him as a sinner.

To which he replies, ***"Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"***

Relentlessly – in a blind stupor the Pharisees keep pushing for answers and the healed man exclaims,

"Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." [He's getting really close now!]

The Pharisees kick him out of town for those words, but Jesus finds the man to finish His healing work...

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

When Jesus said to the healed man, ***"Now you have seen him"*** he didn't mean with physical eyes, **He meant seeing Jesus with the eyes of faith that look to Him in all things and trust Him.**

That's the biggest miracle in this account.

That's what John wants all of us to recognize today.

That's what Jesus wants for all of us today.

5. This story started out with a blame game.

It began with Jesus disciples because they couldn't see past blaming someone for the man's blindness.

The man's parents were blinded by their fear.

We get in on the blame game too – blaming others and even blaming God.

The Pharisees wanted to blame Jesus so they could kill him.

"I'll take the blame," says Jesus. Just as He healed the blind man by spitting in the dirt, so Christ became dirt and spit for us by his death on a cross.

Who is to blame for Jesus dying on a cross? We are, but God takes the blame. Not because he's guilty, but on account of His amazing grace that purifies us and opens our eyes and heals our blindness.

Jesus takes the blame for our blindness, our unbelief, our inability to see the goodness of God for us day after day. That's amazing grace!

Because Jesus took our blame upon himself, God doesn't blame us, but puts the mud of Christ's cross on us and washes it off in our baptism so that we can see.

We see that Jesus is the Son of Man.

We see Jesus crucified and then raised from the dead, and we find ourselves like the blind man who now can see. And because we can see clearly, we confess with the blind man, "**Lord, I believe**" (v. 38).

We trust that Jesus has taken God's judgment upon himself...including our Spiritual blindness... and replaced it with God's mercy and forgiveness and light.

Our blind eyes are replaced with eyes of faith to see. To see the blazing glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and to worship Him.

Having our eyes opened by God frees us from blaming others to keep ourselves safe. Instead Jesus frees us to forgive and even accept blame for our own faults.

You see, Christians have a different response to the blame game, we replace accusation and blame with Jesus' words, "I forgive you."

It's a whole new way of seeing the world and the people who live in it!

Your eyes have seen this salvation (Luke 2:30) and you do see!

So don't operate in the darkness this week seeing only what you want to see. Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man - and not just his physical eyes. Jesus gave the man spiritual sight to see the fullness of **who Jesus is** in every aspect of life.

That's what He has done for you. Jesus opened your eyes in the waters of baptism and calls you to look to him as you navigate life with your spiritual eyes wide open and attentive to His voice.

So may you continue to have eyes of faith and keep them firmly fixed on Jesus - The Son of Man, the Son of God, the King of Kings and the savior of the world.

Look to Jesus and see him fully through the eyes of faith He has given you. Amen.