

"I am the Light of the World"

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Preacher: Simon Attwood

[0 : 00] The reading this morning is John chapter 9, which you will find on page 1075 of the Church Bibles. That's John chapter 9, page 1075.

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus.

But this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work.

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. Go, he told him, wash in the pool of Siloam.

This word means sent. So the man went and washed and came home seeing. His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?

[1 : 10] Some claimed that he was. Others said, No, he only looks like him. But he himself insisted, I am the man. How then were your eyes opened?

They asked. He replied, The man they called 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.

Where is this man? They asked him. I don't know, he said. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

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. 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. Then they turned again to the blind man. What have you to say about him?

[2 : 17] It was your eyes he opened. The man replied, He is a prophet. They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

Is this your son? They asked. Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see? We know he is our son, the parents answered.

And we know he was born blind. 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. 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.

That was why his parents said, He is of age. Ask him. 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. 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.

[3 : 20] Then they asked him, What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? He answered, I have told you already, and you didn't listen. What, do you want to hear it again?

Do you want to become his disciples too? Then they hurled insults at him and said, You are this fellow's disciples. We are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses.

But as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from. The man answered, Now that's remarkable. You don't know where he comes from? Yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners.

He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. To this they replied, You were steeped in sin at birth.

How dare you lecture us? And they threw him out. Jesus heard that they had thrown him out. And when he found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man?

[4 : 22] Who is he, sir? The man asked. Tell me so that I may believe in him. Jesus said, You have now seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you.

Then the man said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see, and those who see will become blind.

Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this, and asked, What? Are we blind too? Jesus said, If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin.

But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. Well, good morning, and let me add my welcome to Jamie's.

My name is Simon. I'm a training minister here. Please keep your Bibles open as we dig into this wonderful passage in John 9. And I'm going to pray for God's help as we start. Let's pray.

[5 : 27] Let's pray. Father, thank you that you promised to speak through your word. We pray that we would see the Lord Jesus more clearly through what we read this morning.

And that by your spirit, you would change our hearts to follow him. All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Why are we afraid of the dark?

It's a primal fear. It's one that we all recognize. Those of you who are children know that your children just have it from when they're born. They don't need to be trained to fear the dark. The phrase we have, the fear of things that go bump in the night.

Even places that are familiar in daylight become treacherous in the dark. We all know the hazards of getting up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom, assuming that we know the layout of our own house, only to stumble over the clothing and smack our head on the doorframe on the way to the loo.

Darkness, not being able to see, leads us into uncertainty, into vulnerability, and into a place of fear and danger.

[6 : 31] Why else do we fill our homes and streets with lights, if not because the darkness is dangerous? To live in darkness is to live in risk, at the mercy of whatever is out there.

Better to walk in the light than to stumble around in the darkness. And if that's true physically, then how much more is it true spiritually?

Wandering around in spiritual darkness, not knowing God, is the most dangerous place he could be. And images of light and darkness are images that John has used throughout this gospel, and in this passage today, one that Jesus uses of himself.

To walk around in spiritual darkness, says Jesus, is spiritual blindness. But to come to him is to walk in the light. And so the focus of our first part of this morning is exactly on that, that Jesus is the light of the world.

Now, over the last month, we've been looking through the gospel of John, looking at different references to passages about water. And in today's passage in John 9, we get the second of two healing miracles that involve pools of water that reveal Jesus' glory.

[7 : 45] Last week, we had a paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda. Here we have a blind man at the pool of Siloam. And between these and throughout the chapters 5 through 10 of John's gospel, we find Jesus in constant conflict with the Jewish religious leaders.

These miracles not only show that Jesus himself is the Son of God in power, but they also show the people of God in Israel how far away their leaders are from the God they claim to speak for.

So Jesus' big statement at the end of verse 5 is, I am the light of the world. And throughout this gospel, Jesus has been giving these big I am statements.

Each directing the people he's speaking to to see that the one standing in front of them is the great I am. The God of the Exodus who revealed his name to Moses, the I am.

And every time Jesus gives one of these statements, he's not only showing those that he is God, but he's showing the people in these crowds what type of God he is. And so what does it mean then that Jesus is the light of the world?

[9 : 03] Well again, if we've been reading through this gospel, we would hear this as an echo from other passages all over the gospel. Follow with me back to chapter 1, which is on page 1063 of the church Bibles.

John shows us that Jesus' arrival in this world was light invading the darkness. As he says in John chapter 1 verse 4, in him was life.

And that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And later again in verse 9, the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

From the very beginning of this book, John wants his readers to understand who Jesus is, to see him for who he truly is, the cosmic light shining into the cosmic darkness.

Jesus is the light who gives life. And later Jesus confirms this of himself. If you turn to page 1073, chapter 8, verse 12.

[10 : 12] When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Into the darkness of a sinful, lost, broken world, marred by death and loss and pain, Jesus shines as the light of hope incarnate.

God with us, revealing himself to us, that we might know him and have life. Jesus shines as a light in the darkness for the promise that all who follow him can receive life.

And it's one of those promises that is just refracted through the whole of the Bible. It's hard not to hear the words light in the darkness and not think a bit about Genesis. The very start of the Bible, God speaks creation into being and speaks light into the chaotic darkness as he makes our universe new.

Maybe for some of you, when you hear light and darkness, you're reminded of Advent, the period before Christmas when we remember the people of God waiting in the darkness for the light to come. When you hear a passage like Isaiah 9, a passage that we use at Christmas quite a lot, you hear words like this.

And just imagine these words with Jesus in your mind. There'll be no more gloom for those who are in distress. In the future, he will honor Galilee of the nations by way of the sea beyond the Jordan.

[11 : 42] The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. Isaiah speaks of one coming out of Galilee.

He will be a light for the people of the world. And that passage in Isaiah 9 goes on to speak of a great king who will rule in justice and bring an age of peace to the world through the people of God.

And so when Jesus strides in onto the scene and says, I am the light of the world, all of these images from across the Bible are landing on this man who is the great promised king that God would raise up for his people to judge justly the whole world.

Here is the one who would bring the light of the knowledge of God to humanity. And this begins to make sense then of what Jesus says in verses 4 and 5 of John 9.

If you follow along there, Jesus says, as long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work.

[12 : 51] While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Whilst Jesus is with the disciples in his ministry, it is daytime. They have the light with them.

But eventually, night will come when Jesus is taken, crucified, and buried. But until that day, the light shines. And so for now, Jesus says to the disciples, we must do the work of him who sent me.

But interesting, isn't it? The word we there, I think we'd expect I must do the work of him who sent me, but no, we must do the work of him who sent me. You disciples and me, Jesus, we must do this work.

And from that, we must assume this work is the work that Jesus is always doing of revealing the truth about God to people so that they may have life. This is a work that he does in his ministry and a work that after he has risen and ascended, he will continue to do through his people as they shine as lights into the world.

The truth of the gospel of Jesus shines out to give people the light of the knowledge of God. And Jesus being the light of the world is also an exclusive claim.

[14 : 10] It's a claim that only Jesus can give us the truth about God. Only he can provide what people need to be saved. And that is true for the whole world. Only he can provide people a way out of darkness and sin and death.

Jesus is the hope of the people of God that they have been waiting for. And the call of John's gospel then is to walk in this light by believing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in his light that we can have life.

No person need ever walk in darkness because the light of Christ shines. So the question is this morning as we dig into this story, well what happens when the light shines?

Well we're going to dig into that in two points if you've got a sermon sheet you can follow along. The light shines to give sight to the blind and to blind those who think they can see. The light shines to give sight to the blind and blind those who think they can see.

So as Jesus and his disciples are traveling, they meet a man who has been born blind. Someone who has essentially lived their whole life in the dark. And whether it's out of superstition or interest, the disciples ask if this blindness came from the sin of this man or the sin of his parents.

[15 : 37] And Jesus really clearly in verse 3 says, neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus, but this happened so that the works of God may be displayed in him. What is about to happen to this man is going to display the work of God both in the life of this man but also in showing us that Jesus really is the light that he claims to be.

So Jesus spits, makes some mud and puts it on the man's eyes and sends him to wash. And as soon as he washes in the pool he immediately gains his sight. And let's not be too quick to move on from that moment.

I think we can get kind of so used to hearing about these miracles that we barely take in how big a deal that actually is. This man has never seen colors, he has never seen the sky, he has never seen the faces of his loved ones and all of a sudden everything comes flooding in.

It is right to say this man really has been given a new life. Through this amazing miracle we will see that he's been given new life in more ways than one. And interestingly for most of the rest of the chapter Jesus departs.

What we get is the story of how this man then explains this to the people around him. So first in verses 8-12 his neighbors they barely even recognize him. They've never seen him up walking around independently.

[17 : 05] And he has to insist that he is in fact the blind beggar they've known his whole life. But that his eyes have been opened by Jesus with this mud and water miracle.

And so the neighbors take the man to the Pharisees which isn't in itself a bad thing to do. The Pharisees are the religious leaders. This is an amazing miracle. It kind of makes sense that you take him there.

But here is where the clash begins. The healing happened yet again as I assume you could probably guess on the Sabbath. Yet again Jesus provokes the Pharisees just like the healing in chapter 5 by going against their closely held rules.

The man explains to them in verse 15 he put mud on my eyes I washed and now I see. But the Pharisees immediate response is not to rejoice in this miracle or to seek Jesus but just to complain.

Verse 16 this man is not from God he does not keep the Sabbath. Notice what's already happening. The extra rules of the Pharisees are prohibiting them from seeing Jesus for who he is.

[18 : 20] What is the work here? Well in the list of 39 things you're not allowed to do on the Sabbath that the Pharisees had one of them was making clay. He's broken the Sabbath by making clay to put on this man's eyes.

It's deliberately provocative. But even in verse 16 we see the Pharisees don't all agree. They say how can a sinner perform such signs? And they're divided. But the conversation progresses.

They ask the man for his opinion. The man says well Jesus is a prophet. But notice even from the start of this conversation the man's begun to consider the evidence and draw the right conclusions.

He's growing stronger in his belief about Jesus as he talks to these Pharisees. And the Pharisees do not like this. It doesn't fit with their narrative.

So they send for the man's parents. Now the parents' reaction gives us another perspective on this story and it's unfortunately one of fear. The Pharisees wield such strong social control that when the parents are asked about their son they give a bare minimum answer and then deflect back to their son.

[19 : 34] And John explains this for us in verse 22. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders who had already decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

Pharisees have no space for Jesus. He doesn't fit with their view of God so they wield their social power against him by intimidating the people. Remember these men are meant to be the people who teach Israel about a God who is just and compassionate and kind.

But here they are scheming intimidating and ultimately power hungry. So turning once more to the man in verse 24 they say something truly ironic.

Give glory to God by telling the truth they said we know this man is a sinner. Give glory to God by telling the truth we know this man is a sinner.

Notice they don't give glory to God by telling a lie about Jesus. These men are blinded to the truth about Jesus by their own assumptions.

[20 : 49] And so they plow on with the man asking him how this healing happened which at this point the man has already explained and he begins to get exasperated and potentially I think in verse 27 just a little bit cheeky.

I've told you already and you did not listen why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too? You can imagine the rage and indeed that is exactly what we get enraged the Pharisees fire back with insults stating their credentials as followers of Moses as a reason to legitimize their power and rejection of Jesus.

But Jesus has already said in this gospel that if you believe in Moses then you believe in him because Moses wrote about him. So even the Pharisees defense actually doesn't hold up.

And finally seeming contented to be counted as a disciple of Jesus the man lays out the evidence and the conclusions that he's come to in verse 30 just follow with me.

Now that is remarkable. you don't know where he comes from yet he opened my eyes we know that God does not listen to sinners he listens to the godly person who does his will no one has ever heard of the eyes of a man born blind being opened if this man were not from God he could do nothing do you hear that this man has figured it out everything that's happened to him just shows you that Jesus is from God he must be all the evidence stacks right up in that direction but the Pharisees backed into a corner fired their last bullet in verse 34 you are steeped in sin at birth how dare you lecture us and they threw him out in yet another dark moment of irony they accused this man of exactly the opposite of what Jesus said about him in verse 3 it wasn't this man's sin that was the reason for his blindness yet the

[22 : 46] Pharisees go it must have been you must be a sinner and of course this is happening because Jesus is exposing the Pharisees for what they are exposing them as false teachers who do not know the God they claim to represent so what does the light of the world do when he shines well the first effect is to give sight to the blind when Jesus comes back to this man he asks him if he believes in the son of man Jesus is using a specific title from the book of Daniel in the Old Testament the son of man was the one who would have the Jewish Messiah and this man seeing Jesus physically for the first time all of a sudden also sees him spiritually do you believe in the son of man friend you're looking at him what an amazing thing this man has been blind his whole life one of the first things he sees on the first day he can ever see is

God right in front of him what a beautiful thing and so his response in verse 38 Lord I believe and he worshipped him and what else could be the right response of being brought into the light and seeing God in Christ other than to worship the story of this man ends with him brought not just to physical but spiritual sight and to new spiritual life as Jesus brings him from darkness to light from death to life he may have been rejected by the synagogue but now he's worshipping God face to face let me say that goes the same for anyone who's reading this gospel and hears about Jesus only Jesus can grant that miraculous sight that we need to know God but the promise is that all who put their faith in him receive that spiritual sight as this man did so if you're here today and you don't yet know

Jesus pray that this miraculous sight would be given to you and come into the light and follow him and for all who do believe in Jesus remember that the right response to hearing about Jesus is always just to worship him to praise him for the mercy and grace of knowing him to live in the light and live as people of the light as we speak about Jesus to others so that they may too see Christ and know God be saved from sin darkness and death and come into the kingdom of light it's a miracle that only Jesus can do so we pray for that as we praise him for the light that we've received but finally there's a second effect to the bright light of Jesus to blind those who think they can see as this man worships Jesus he teaches

Jesus teaches those around him look with me at verse 39 Jesus said for judgment I have come into this world so the blind will see and those who see will become blind some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked what are we blind to Jesus said if you are blind you would not be guilty of sin but now that you claim you can see your guilt remains Jesus has come to bring judgment to separate those who believe in him from those who don't those who believe in him have sight and are saved but those who reject him who refuse him like these Pharisees well they will remain blind guilty of their sin unforgiving because they have rejected the only one who could save them rather than worshipping God they go to war against him these Pharisees are blind guides they're teaching leading people to stumble around in the darkness vulnerable and lost so they claim to see God they reject

Jesus when he comes and in spite of all the evidence they continue to reject and so their guilt remains Jesus shines as a light that blinds these men that exposes them as false teachers who have nothing to offer the people let me say how dangerous our preconceptions might be when we come to Jesus how much our assumptions no matter how seemingly pious or religious or reputable or moral blind us to the truth about God if they keep us from Christ we know this though don't we because if you're sitting there thinking well I couldn't believe in Jesus he can't be God because he disagrees with the morality that our society holds dear well of course he does because he brings true light true justice in every way that our society and every society gets this wrong

[28 : 10] Jesus brings truth we must not be blinded to Jesus by saying that he disagrees with what our society holds dear but instead come to him and John's message for his readers here is not just don't be like the Pharisees but also don't listen to anyone who claims to tell the truth about God if it's not about Jesus anything that claims to be wise to give life and light but isn't about Jesus the light of the world is false he is the only one who has anything to offer he is the only one who can show us God he is the only one who can bring us life and light and we know this because anyone who's chosen to follow him has not only seen him for who he is but the clouds of fog around us have begun to clear as we see the truth about him and by his light we begin to see everything afresh and anew and life begins to make sense because we see the God who made us and we know him so very simply the only right response to the light of the world is to worship him friends see the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ and worship him let's pray

Lord Jesus you are the light of the world and you have made us your people your light to shine into the world through knowledge of you Father help us to know Jesus better to walk in the light that he gives to receive the life that he offers and to worship you we pray in his name amen well thank you