

# Satisfied in a restoring God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good afternoon everyone, and welcome to our Wednesday lunchtime Bible talk. We're going to be reading from John chapter 9, so if you have your Bible open that would be very helpful.

And let me pray as you're finding the passage. Father God, we thank you that you're a God who reveals himself. Thank you that you haven't left us to wander around in the dark, but you have entered our reality, shown us what you are like.

And we pray now, Father, as we open up your word, that we'd see more clearly what you are like. And that as our own hearts are exposed, that we would be changed and come to love you, you've lighted the world, all the more so.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, we're reading from John chapter 9, and again, it's quite a hefty passage again, all the way through to the end of the chapter.

So, let me begin. As Jesus passed by, he saw a man born blind, and his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

[ 1 : 26 ] Jesus answered, it was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed through him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day.

Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva.

Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which means scent. So he went and washed and came back seeing.

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? Some said, It is he. Others said, No, but he is like him.

He kept saying, I am the man. So they said to him, Then how were your eyes opened? He answered, The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash.

[ 2 : 36 ] So I went and washed and received my sight. They said to him, Where is he? He said, I do not know. They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly being blind.

Now, it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 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.

Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, but 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. 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.

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 and asked them, Is this your son who you say was born blind?

[ 3 : 48 ] How then does he now see? His parents answered, We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. 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. His parents said these things because they feared the Jews.

But the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be the Christ, he was to be put out to the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said, He is of age.

Ask him. 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.

He answered, Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. They said to him, What did he do to you?

[ 4 : 47 ] How did he open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples?

And they reviled him, saying, You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.

The man answered, Why, this is an amazing thing. You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 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.

Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

They answered him, You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out.

[ 5 : 54 ] And having found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man? He answered, And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him? Jesus said to him.

You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you. He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.

Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, Are we also blind? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt.

But now that you say, we see, your guilt remains. Well, there are few things more frustrating in life than having a conversation with someone who is adamant that they know best.

This was really the story of my childhood. Being the younger of two siblings has its disadvantages, especially when your older sister is rather self-assured.

[ 7 : 13 ] She enjoyed bossing me around whenever she could, and whenever questioned, her response would simply be, I know best. I could point out to her that she was leading us into a bog.

I could even point out the warning signs showing that there's a marshland ahead. But she still knew best. Even when we were knee-deep in mud and had lost our wellies, she still knew best.

It is very difficult to persuade someone who thinks that they see clearly that they are actually as blind as a mole. Well, here in John 9, Jesus comes into a scuffle with some people just like this. Despite the overwhelming evidence that Jesus is who he says he is, they refuse to see clearly. So let's look at this remarkable encounter.

Our first heading for today is, Jesus is the only one who can help us to see clearly. Looking at verses 1 to 7, Jesus is the only one who can help us to see clearly.

[ 8 : 25 ] The story starts with a theological discussion between the disciples and Jesus that is prompted as they pass a man who was born blind.

They ask, Rabbi, who sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind? Back in their day, it was assumed that if you were suffering, then it must be a direct result of sin that you or somebody else had committed.

So did the man sin? Or did his parents? Well, Jesus says, no, no, no, it doesn't work like that. Yes, there is a definite link between sin and suffering, but you cannot confidently say that there is a direct link.

Sin's presence in the world results in worldwide suffering. But this isn't a case of cause and effect. In fact, this man was born blind, not because of something that he did or that his parents did, but so that God's works might be displayed in him.

Verse 3. In other words, this man was born blind so that God could reveal something to us. This man was born blind so that we might see that Jesus is the only one who can help us to see clearly.

[ 9 : 51 ] So how does what follows show us this? Well, Jesus makes a huge claim about himself in verse 5. He says, I am the light of the world.

I am the only one who can pull you out of your spiritual darkness. And to demonstrate that he really is the only one who can give us spiritual sight, he heals someone who has no physical sight.

If he can heal somebody who is physically blind, then surely he can heal a spiritual blindness too. And he's also drawing a comparison here.

Jesus is saying that we are spiritually blind from birth, just like this man was physically blind from birth. And whereas this man was blind not because of his sin, we are spiritually blind because of

ours.

It's interesting how Jesus goes about restoring this man's sight in verse 6. He spits on the ground, he forms a muddy paste, and he rubs it in the man's eyes before telling him to go wash in the pool. [11:08] You'd think that this would make things rather worse than better, wouldn't you? Well, we can't know for definite why Jesus chose to heal the man this way.

But here's what I think is happening. The event is somewhat reminiscent of what happened at creation when man was first created.

God formed Adam out of the dust. And in a similar fashion, Jesus now forms new eyes from the dust for this man. It may be an illusion that Jesus is the creator.

And as God shone light into the darkness at the very beginning of time, Jesus was going to shine light into our spiritual darkness and restore us back to our former glory.

Well, whatever the reason behind the method, the purpose is very clear. Jesus says, I am the light of the world, and I can back up my claim.

[12:13] I am the only one who can give you spiritual sight and help you to see things as they truly are, evidenced by the fact that I have just healed this man and given him his physical sight back.

Well, bold claims like this are usually met with some opposition, aren't they? We don't like being told that we are blind, first of all.

And therefore, we try and come up with the reasons for why we shouldn't believe. We don't like admitting that we are wrong. And we'll do anything, even if they're ridiculous, to ensure that our lives stay just the way that they are.

And in verse 8 to 34, that is exactly what we see. So our next point, Jesus is rejected by those who think that they can see.

Looking at verses 8 to 34. The man is questioned by his neighbors. This man's neighbors couldn't believe that this restored man was the same man that used to beg in the streets.

[13:24] It must be a trick, they thought. It must be his doppelganger, or perhaps his twin. Well, their reaction is somewhat understandable, isn't it? I mean, you don't see people who are blind receiving their sight every day.

But the neighbors are at least willing to inquire. And despite their disbelief, they seem willing to weigh up the event and seek out Jesus in verse 12. However, the next group we meet aren't painted in quite so forgiving a light.

The next group, the Pharisees, in verse 13, are people who would willingly remain blind rather than come to Jesus to receive their sight.

This man, who has had his sight miraculously restored, is now brought before the Pharisees with the hope that they might shed some light on the situation.

Surely those who have the most spiritual insight will be able to explain what has happened to this man's neighbors. Or perhaps not.

[14:31] Verse 14 sounds a rather ominous tone. It was on the Sabbath that Jesus healed this man. The alarm bells start to ring.

The Pharisees aren't going to like this one bit. And they're not. Rather than assess the event for what it was, a miraculous healing that restored a man and liberated him from his life of begging, they start to focus on how this happened.

Verse 15. Why? Well, if Jesus had done some form of work on the Sabbath, then they could discount his healing completely.

They were looking for reasons to disbelieve. The Pharisees had become so restrictive about what one could do on the Sabbath that they had undermined God's law.

Yes, God had said not to work on the Sabbath, but he'd also said to do good on the Sabbath. So if an ox or a child fell down a ditch, well, God compelled his people to rescue that ox or the child from the ditch and to put in some hard work to do so.

[15:47] But the Pharisees were so obsessed with the need to feel self-righteous that even things God commanded became banned on the Sabbath.

So because Jesus worked to make a paste out of the dirt to put on this man's eyes, many of them said, this work couldn't be of God because he hadn't kept their Sabbath rules.

But some, with a little more sense, said, how can a man who is a sinner do such signs? So there was a division amongst them and that just simply couldn't be.

They couldn't have the public seeing that they couldn't come to a collective decision. They had to save face. So they moved on to interrogate this man's parents instead.

If they could harass his parents into saying that this wasn't their son or that he hadn't actually been born blind, then the problem would be solved. They could disregard Jesus' claims and go on deluding themselves.

[16:55] Well, the interrogation doesn't quite go to plan. Despite their best efforts, the parents confirm the facts that the man has already told them. But feeling the pressure, knowing that excommunication is looming if they side with Jesus, they choose to say no more and thrust their son back into the interrogation chair.

And the second interrogation, the man born blind goes badly too. The Pharisees start by patronizing this healed man.

They say, give glory to God and tell us what really happened. In other words, stop playing your silly little games and tell us the truth, you little sinner.

Enough with your ridiculous lies. ridiculous lies. But it was the Pharisees who were being ridiculous. Even this man, who probably knew very little of the law, could see that the Pharisees were being outrageous.

He basically says in verse 25 to 27, you won't listen to what I'm saying. You are actively refusing to see. You're trying so hard to find something that will discredit this man that you are missing the wood for the trees.

[18:15] It's plain obvious, really. I was blind, but now I see. That just doesn't happen every day. However, the Pharisees refuse to see sense.

They're going to stick with what they think they know, the law of Moses, which ironically, they have twisted badly rather than taking Jesus seriously, the man who has come from somewhere that they do not know.

They are frightened of change and they want things to stay just the way that they are. It's scarily similar to what we are like, is it not?

We like being the ones in the know, the ones who can see, the ones who people come to for advice. And we're threatened by anything that jeopardizes our status quo.

We want life to continue on as normal. When God enters your world, like he did the Pharisees' world, we should expect some change.

[19:23] If God enters your world, you can't just ignore him and continue on as normal. Well, back to the story. The tables finally turn in verse 30.

The man who has had his sight restored cannot take it any longer. And he starts teaching the teachers of the law. He says, this is rather amazing.

Amazing thing has happened to me, but you are trying to find some technicalities technicalities so that you can discount it completely and carry on the way that you are.

It's blooming obvious where this man comes from. He opened a blind man's eyes. Nobody does that unless they are from God.

But despite this being obvious, the Pharisees don't budge, not even an inch. Instead, they harass this man, call him a sinner, and chuck him out of the synagogue.

[20:29] Well, we must be careful not to caricature the Pharisees too much. For we have the exact same capacity in us to behave in exactly the same way.

When exposed and confronted with the truth that shows us up, what's and all, that is our reaction too, is it not? Get rid of the exposure rather than face up to the facts.

That's what we're prone to do. Well, the Pharisees should have known better. Isaiah 42 had promised the coming of one who would be a light to the nations and open the eyes of the blind, rescue people from darkness.

Isaiah writes, I am the Lord. I have called you in righteousness. I will take you by the hand and keep you. I will give you as a covenant for the people a light for the nations to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

This promise was being fulfilled right underneath the Pharisees' noses. They were the spiritual elite, but they still refused except the one they had been waiting for.

[21:54] These know-it-alls were found wanting. But why? Well, those who think that they see clearly don't think they need their sight restored.

That's the tragedy of our human race. We are arrogant and proud know-it-alls, me included, and we prefer to remain blind naturally than actually see clearly.

We are like a person who refuses to wear their glasses because we feel that we know better. We've always got on okay, so why do anything differently now?

Well, there's a very good reason why we should do things differently now and give Jesus a fair hearing. And that's because of our last point.

Jesus came to restore and to remove sight. Verses 35 to the end. The encounter comes to its climax in verse 35.

[ 23 : 02 ] Jesus comes looking for the man he had healed because he's heard that the Pharisees have chucked him out of the synagogue. And Jesus has one more thing to offer him. He's not only going to restore his physical sight, but Jesus is going to restore his spiritual sight as well.

The ability to see the truth and to see Jesus as he truly is. So he seeks the man out and asks him a question. Do you believe in the Son of Man?

Which is just another way of saying do you believe in the Messiah? Do you believe in the Christ?

Well, the man probably does, but the penny hasn't quite dropped for him yet.

Despite his confession earlier in the chapter that Jesus must be from God, it hasn't quite dropped.

But that is going to change.

Jesus lets the light shine into this man's spiritual darkness and says, you have seen him. you have seen the Christ and it is he who is speaking to you now.

[ 24 : 12 ] The light breaks in. Jesus not only transforms him by restoring his physical sight and enabling him to start making a living for himself again, but Jesus reveals who he is to him, gives him spiritual sight, shows him the truth, transforms his worldview and his aims in life in just a second, brings him out of the darkness and into the light and a man can do nothing in response but to worship him in verse 38.

But there's another side to this encounter too, which is why if we don't like changing, we need to listen. Jesus has come into the world to help people to see, to see him and his work clearly, to his offer for forgiveness and many have and will come to receive that great gift.

But he also comes to blind and to bring judgment. Verse 39, Jesus says, for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see like this man born blind and those who see or at least claim to see may become blind.

There are only two ways you can react to this encounter. One, respond like the man born blind.

Assess Jesus honestly and receive the sight that he offers.

Or two, respond like the Pharisees who are stuck in their ways. Approach Jesus with bias and reject the light and stay in the darkness.

[ 26 : 04 ] Well, you might say, thanks but no thanks. I'm quite happy in my darkness. Thank you very much. Well, friends, if that is you, then you need to wake up.

Verse 40, some Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, are we also blind? Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you would have no guilt.

But now that you say we see, your guilt remains. You might feel content and feel like you are the one in the know.

You might like criticizing people's opinions from your superior perspective. Well, if that is you, Jesus has some stern words to say to you.

He is very harsh on those who claim to see clearly. If you have been privileged like these Pharisees were, to see Jesus' works, to hear his words, and you still choose to reject him, then guilt is laid at your feet.

[ 27 : 14 ] Even hearing this sermon now ups the stakes. You have to do something with what you've heard. Our decisions are not morally neutral.

If you reject Jesus, who is the light of the world, then Jesus will give you the darkness that you ask for. And not just in this life, as you continue to delude yourself, but he'll give you darkness in the life to come to you.

So, Jesus' plea, and my plea, come out of the darkness. Have your sight restored.

Have your guilt dealt with by Jesus himself. Come to the light of the world, who reveal the truth to you, help you see the world clearly as it is, give you eternal life, and leave this world of shadows behind you.

Let me pray for us. Father God, we recognize that we are very prone to being know-it-alls, people who are stuck in our ways and who don't want change.

[ 28 : 30 ] Father, we recognize that many of us here will have come to Jesus as the light. We would have allowed him to expose our darkness and show us up warts and all, and we have come to him for our healing.

But there may be some here today who have not. We pray if that is them, that they would come to you, come to the light, leave the darkness behind, and have true forgiveness. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.