

**Can You See It?** John 9:1-12 [www.bible-sermons.org](http://www.bible-sermons.org) November 23, 2008

Over the last month we've been looking at one incredible day in the life of Jesus. It was during His last Feast of Sukkoth in the seventh and eighth day of that feast. It began with the Water Ceremony in which He declared Himself to be the source of Living Water. He promised that if we believe in Him, streams of living water would flow from within us. The day focused on the trap that was set for Him by presenting Him with a woman caught in adultery. "Let the one that is without sin cast the first stone." The day ended with lighting of the fourth great candelabrum. The crowd was contemplating the coming of the great Light and the full salvation He would bring when Jesus cried out, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." Some believed. Others rejected His statements. Some began to argue with Jesus. That confrontation ended with Jesus declaring Himself to be I Am who was before Abraham. They picked up stones to execute Jesus for blasphemy, but He slipped away.

I'd call it a day, wouldn't you? It must have been early evening. He just escaped death, but this is not the end of the story. <sup>1</sup> *As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.* On the way out of the Temple, Jesus passed a blind beggar. It was the practice of the disabled to sit on the Southern steps of the Temple and beg. The closer you could get to the Hulda Gates, the more traffic would go by your beggar's bowl and thus the greater the chances of getting enough alms for survival. Begging was a disabled person's only means of support. Jews held alms giving in as high regard as obeying the Laws of Moses. Still, most of those beggars barely survived on the charity given them.

<sup>2</sup> *His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* The title of rabbi merely was a term of respect for one's teacher. It wasn't until the end of the first century that it came to mean one who had officially passed rabbinical training.

The prevailing thought at the time was that afflictions were the result of sin. Jesus never denied that that may be the case. In fact, He told the invalid that was healed at the pool of Bethesda to go and sin no more lest a worse thing happen to him. (John 5:14) But as to suffering for your parents' sins, the Old Testament prophets clearly declared that was not the case. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel said that each generation would suffer or be blessed because of their own life and not that of their parents. (Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:20) Jesus taught that all are sinners. When asked if the Jews that were killed and whose blood Pilate mingled with a sacrifice were worse sinners than others, Jesus said that unless they repented the same could happen to them. (Luke 13:2-3)

<sup>3</sup> *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.* In this case, Jesus said this was not the result of some sin. You might question how they would even ask if it was the man who sinned since he was born blind, but Jews believed you could sin in the womb. (Consider Jacob and Esau Genesis 25:22) So if it wasn't the result of sin, why would sovereign God allow him to be born blind?

**Commented [notes1]:** 14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." John 5:14 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 29 "In those days people will no longer say, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' 30 Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes--his own teeth will be set on edge. Jer 31:29-30 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 20 The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him. Ezek 18:20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 2 Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? Luke 13:2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 22 The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. Gen 25:22 (NIV)

God doesn't override the results of the curse upon the earth from the original sin. We are winding down, devolving, not evolving. The mutation rate of each generation is so high that biologists see a future point where man will no longer be able to survive. The result is increased rates of diabetes, cancer, allergies, and other physical problems. (Romans 8:20-21) Who sinned? Adam and Eve and everyone since! But Jesus pointed the disciples to what God was doing presently. He was going to display His glory by giving sight to this man who was born blind. Even today, ophthalmologists cannot help someone born blind. If for genetic reasons the optical nerve did not develop, there is no cure short of a miracle.

**Commented [notes6]:** 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Romans 8:20-21 (NIV)

God often takes the evil of humanity and displays the wonder of His glory. He used Pharaoh to reveal His greatness to the world. (Exodus 10:1-2) He used the cross to bring salvation. We have come to this passage the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Our economy and the economy of the world are looking pretty dismal, but our passage today gives us hope that God can use anything for His glory. He can take any situation and work something glorious from it. The wrath of man will praise Him. (Psalm 76:10) It doesn't matter what we are going through in life, God can use it for His glory. (Romans 5:3) In fact, it is usually in the most difficult times that we grow the most spiritually. If this man was born blind for whatever physical reason, God was going to use it in his life to bring him into a relationship with the One who can save not only his physical body but his eternal soul as well. (John 9:38)

**Commented [notes7]:** 1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them 2 that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD." Ex 10:1-2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes8]:** 10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Psalms 76:10 (KJV)

**Commented [notes9]:** 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; Romans 5:3 (NIV)

**Commented [notes10]:** 38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. John 9:38 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matt 5:10-12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes12]:** 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thess 5:18 (NIV)

We can be thankful for all the blessings of abundance and health, but we can also be thankful that we serve a God who can bring goodness from difficulty. (Matthew 5:10-12) Perhaps this Thanksgiving we can be one of those odd Christians who thank God for everything. (1Thessalonians 5:18) What if economic difficulty is what helps America turn from its idols of materialism to put God first? Then we could thank God for it. The blind man would never thank God for his blind condition, but in eternity he'll be thanking God for it. Many of the Jews that day had a hard time accepting that Jesus is the Suffering Servant Savior. This man wouldn't. He was blind and now he sees in more ways than one.

The Apostle Paul understood this. That is why he exhorts us to give thanks in everything and reminds us that that is God's will for us. This Thanksgiving, let's be radically Christian and thank God for everything! Amen? What thing in your life can you change your attitude about and see as an opportunity for God to keep you close to Him? Will you thank God for how He will use that problem for your eternal good?

You would think Jesus would have been in a hurry to get away from the temple, especially since he had escaped being stoned and had to sneak away through the crowds that gathered for that last great evening of the Feast of Sukkoth. Why is He stopping for the blind man? *4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.* He will do what the Spirit of God directs Him to do. He only has a short time upon the earth to demonstrate to mankind what a life in the Spirit looks like. (John 7:33)

**Commented [notes13]:** 33 Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. John 7:33 (NIV)

Jesus had just three years of ministry. That was day. Night was the coming betrayal and crucifixion. All of us have a day to work in. For all of us night is coming, the time when we are no longer able to work. (1Thessalonians 5:5) The earlier

**Commented [notes14]:** 5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 1 Thess 5:5 (NIV)

manuscripts have "we" as the subject. Later manuscripts changed it to "I", which was probably a copy error. I like the fact that Jesus includes us in working while it is day. Let's see what the Holy Spirit has for us each day. We should always be ready for more. We don't need a vacation from Spirit directed ministry. We have eternity for that. When you go on a vacation, you can still be ministering.

When we pass from this life, one thing you won't regret is working while it was day. It will lay up for you treasure in heaven for which you will be forever grateful.

(Matthew 6:21) What we will regret is not doing what the Spirit was urging us to do. We'll see what could have been if we had obeyed. Let's work while it is day! The night is coming when no one can work.

**Commented [notes15]:** 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matt 6:20 (NIV)

*5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* He had to shine for us during His three years of ministry. What stories would we be missing in the gospels if He didn't give it His all? What examples would we not have if He slacked off?

Everything He did and said was a light to us who were in darkness. (John 8:29) It reminds me of one of those light flares that illumines the battlefield. It is shot into the air and ignites slowly falling to the ground. As long as it is descending you can see the enemy and the whole battlefield, but it will go out and darkness will descend again.

**Commented [notes16]:** 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." John 8:29 (NIV)

Jesus tells us that we are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14) That is because His Spirit is within us. That big flare went out (Jesus earthly presence) and million little flares lit up (followers of Jesus). We have the privilege of shining while it is day but our time is limited too. We need to ignite other little flares before our time is up. People need to be able to see the enemy of their soul. They need this battlefield illuminated. Shine!

**Commented [notes17]:** 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Matt 5:14 (NIV)

*6 Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.* This was the work of the Holy Spirit. This was light to a world in darkness. The crowd had been blind to who He really is and He was about to illustrate their need. In addition to that, He would fulfill three Isaiah prophecies of the Messiah giving sight to the blind. (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5) One of those prophecies related to the Great Light that was just lit when Jesus declared Himself to be the light of the world. In that prophecy, the One who gives sight to the blind is the One that is a light to the world. The miracle of sight verified His declaration of being the light of the world. (Isaiah 42:6-7)

**Commented [notes18]:** 18 In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Isaiah 29:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Isaiah 35:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** 6 "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, 7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. Isaiah 42:6-7 (NIV)

Jesus used saliva before. (Mark 7:33; 8:23) It was somewhat strange that He would do so. The Law saw saliva and blood as things that caused uncleanness. (Leviticus 15:8) The cult of Asclepius claimed eye healing through a concoction made with spittle so rabbi renounced the use of it. In addition, it was a Sabbath, and the rabbis considered making the mud to be work. Jesus couldn't have been any more politically incorrect.

**Commented [notes21]:** 33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. Mark 7:33 (NIV)

**Commented [notes22]:** 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" Mark 8:23 (NIV)

Was Jesus showing that even what was considered unclean from Him was actually holy and useful? Remember the preceding argument was about whether or not He was Messiah. Sight to the blind, especially one blind from birth was definitely a sign that He was who He claimed to be, the Great Light predicted by Isaiah. Performing

**Commented [notes23]:** 8 "If the man with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, that person must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Lev 15:8 (NIV)

the healing with spit and making mud on the Sabbath was showing that He is the holy Lord of the Sabbath in Whom there is nothing unclean. (Luke 6:5)

Here is another thing to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. Jesus will prove to the questioning heart that He is the Messiah. You don't need to go around wondering if you are truly right with God or if you've just fallen into some man made belief. Jesus proved it. He fulfilled the prophecies in such a way that the inquiring mind must come away, like investigative journalist Lee Stroebel, utterly convinced that He must be God incarnate. If you were a Jewish person making this story up, you would never have had Him using spit and it wouldn't be done on the Sabbath, but that is what Jesus did because He is greater than we would imagine.

<sup>7</sup> "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. The actual Pool of Siloam was found four years ago. And just a couple of years ago the steps to it from the Temple were discovered. Jesus and the blind man were at the highest point in Jerusalem and Jesus sent him to the lowest. There were ritual baths right below the steps. The pool of Bethesda was just around the corner. Why did He send the blind man all that way? Someone had to help him get there.

It was called "Sent" because the water was "sent" from the Gihon Spring through the tunnel of Hezekiah to the pool. It was just that morning that the High Priest had drawn water out of that pool for the Water Ceremony. As he did so, he quoted Isaiah 12:3. *With joy you will draw water out of the wells of salvation.* The people thought the expression was related to a time when the Holy Spirit would be poured out. Jesus sent the man there to show that He is the true dispenser of the Holy Spirit. The whole ceremony pointed to Him and He proved it in an undeniable way. The mud over the man's eyes may have been meant to send a message to the unbelieving ones that argued with Jesus earlier. Jesus may have had in mind Isaiah 44:18. <sup>18</sup>*They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.*

Like the leper, Namaan, who had to go down to the Jordan to be cleansed at the word of the prophet Elisha, this blind man had to be led down the steps to the lowest point in the city. (2Kings 5:10-12) And as he washed the dried mud from his eyes, suddenly the evening scene lit by the great candelabrum was visible to him. Jesus said, *"If anyone will follow me, he will have the light of life."* The blind man followed Jesus' instructions and came home seeing. If you follow Jesus, you will have the light of life. Could Jesus have shown it with any clearer demonstration than that? He is telling us all to wash the mud from our eyes!

<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?"* Our eyes are so much of our countenance that when his eyes were changed, even his neighbors didn't recognize him. There was also another great difference, a smile on his face that was so much brighter than any they had ever seen him wear. The transformation was so amazing that it startled people. That is how it should be with everyone who finds the light of life from following Jesus. We shouldn't be recognizable to the people who once saw us

**Commented [notes24]:** 5 Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Luke 6:5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 10 Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

11 But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy."

12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

2 Kings 5:10-12 (NIV)

begging for the things of this world. The light in our eyes and the smile on our face should give us a whole new appearance. (2Corinthians 3:18)

<sup>9</sup> Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." What a transformation! He had to testify that he was the man that used to sit and beg.

<sup>10</sup> "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. <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." Why are they demanding to know how it happened? Because this is a Messianic sign! Notice in the man's testimony, Jesus never asked if he believed, or if he had the faith to be healed. Jesus just does it and gives a command. This is a verification miracle. This is declaring to all who heard Jesus that day that He truly is the source of living water, He truly does give the light of life. It confirms His words of being from above. It confirms that they would die in their sins if they refused to believe. It challenges them and us to wash the mud from our eyes and see. Can you see it?

<sup>12</sup> "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said. The crowd wanted to see the One that did the miracle, to see if He is the Messiah, but Jesus did not follow the man to the pool. Jesus will find the man later and lead him all the way to full spiritual sight. (John 9:38)

Where is this man that gives sight? He's right here. His presence fills the sanctuary. He fills the heart of every believer. He still invites you to follow and still promises that if you do, you will have the light of life. You don't have to wander in darkness, unaware of the enemy around you, unable to see his traps and pitfalls. You don't have to wonder if Jesus is truly God and Savior.

You are invited to go and wash the blindness from your eyes, only you must go down to lowest, humblest place. That place is recognizing you are blind and helpless, a sinner in need of a Savior. You may need someone to walk you down those stairs from this temple to that lowly place, because it is hard to make the journey when you can't see the steps in front of you. With joy you can draw water out of the wells of salvation and go away seeing. (Psalm 116:13) Jesus proved His words with this miracle. Can you see it? If you need someone to guide you down those steps this morning, come forward as we sing and an elder will guide you to that pool of cleansing, Jesus our Savior.

**Commented [notes26]:** 18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Cor 3:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes27]:** 38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. John 9:38 (NIV)

**Commented [notes28]:** 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. Psalms 116:13 (NIV)