
What is Sight?

John 9:1-41

Pastor Russ Kennedy

Listen to some words from people who were blind:

Helen Keller...

“It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision.”

“It's wonderful to climb the liquid mountains of the sky. Behind me and before me is God and I have no fears.”

Stevie Wonder...

“Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn't mean he lacks vision.”

Fanny Crosby...

“When I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior”

Do you ever think about losing your sight?

My being blind for a few hours as result of poison ivy over 80% of my body.

What does to mean to see?

What does it mean to see well?

From 5th grade until about 8 years ago, 20/400 vision. Drop my glasses – someone else had to find them...

Retinal scars into which letters drop and disappear...

But then, what is spiritual sight?

Several times in different gospels, Jesus heals blind people. These are not just stories about amazing miracles. Every one of them tells us something about what it means to really see. They tell us something about spiritual blindness and spiritual sight. So does our text this morning.

True spiritual sight is about who you see Jesus to be. Watch with me how this unfolds in our text.

The Healer**(v. 1-7)**

¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ 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 ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

Look at the varying response to blindness.

Questions in Spiritual Dimness**(v. 1-2)**

The disciples want to do analysis. They have a theological question that is raised by this man's unfortunate situation. Now, he must be known to them because they know he was born blind. So they ask a question that haunts many today, "Why is this man blind?" "Who sinned, the man or the parents so that he was born blind?"

I see three problems here that are evidences of these disciples needing spiritual glasses:

Earnest Christians can ask silly questions: it is not possible for the man to have sinned before he was born. Now I understand what they are getting at: whose sin is behind this man's suffering?

Not all that we suffer from is caused by sin. Some suffering is caused by just living in fallenness. Some suffering is caused by folly. And yes, some suffering is caused by our sin and others sin against us.

Suffering should elicit compassion, not merely theological speculation. Now I want to be careful here - we do live before the face of God. We ought to be asking good questions. But shouldn't the first question here be, "Jesus, can you help this poor man?"

Correction by Spiritual Light**(v. 3-5)**

Jesus says something startling. This man was born blind so that God would be glorified. The purpose for blindness here is not punishment but glory. The purpose is to put on display the miraculous power of the Light who is walking in darkness. The point of this man's blindness is so that we will graphically see how light is necessary for spiritual sight.

Compassion with Spiritual Power**(v. 6-7)**

Spit, mud and eye pack and a tapping journey to a pool. Washing with water at the Pool called "Sent". And suddenly, sight! He can see. The miracle takes place, not at some declaration by Jesus, "Be healed..." Rather, the miracle takes place because the man believes. How do we know he believes what Jesus says? Because He obeys what Jesus commands.

True spiritual sight causes faith to obey.

The Man

(v. 8-12)

Ah, the gossip, nosy and maybe even inquiring, neighbors...

⁸ 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?" ⁹ Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰ So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

Are you the man?

The neighbors are so stunned at what has happened that they go so far as to say, "Are you the same man?" Has someone pulled a switch on us? No, he really is that guy.

Who is that man?

Now the question is, "What happened?" He tells his story. In doing so John confirms that his faith is expressed in obeying – he goes and does what he is told. He only knows the name of Jesus but he does not know where he is.

True sight believes Jesus in an obeying way even when Jesus is not fully known.

The Prophet

(v. 13-23)

Well, now the religious leaders are going to get involved.

The Testimony of the Seeing

(v. 13-17)

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for 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. ¹⁷ 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 neighbors (it appears) take the man to talk to the religious leaders. Now if you have been following the story you know this is not going to go well. Then John sticks in this little gem, "Jesus healed him on the Sabbath." What should have been a glad time now is a grinding teeth time. They listen to his story and you can see them looking at one another.

A division ensues: he can't be from God because he broke the Sabbath. Others thought he must be from God because he does these miracles. Here are two groups of blind people struggling with gorilla in the room. It can't be because... It must be because...

So they turn to the man who has been healed – who do you think he is? I love his answer here – he is a prophet. He knows he is a teacher – but only prophets could do these kind of miracles. Conclusion? He is a prophet. In other words, "if someone who heal my blindness is prophesying among you, shouldn't you believe and obey like I did?"

The Fear of the Unbelieving**(v. 18-23)**

¹⁸ 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 ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹ 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." ²² (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

Get it? The Jews did not believe. This paragraph is loaded with irony. They deny the reality right in front of them. So, they call in his parents. They are summoned in front of the religiousnasti. They are afraid. Yes, this our son was born blind and, look wave your hands in front of him, he now sees. How that happened? No clue. Ask him. He's old enough to speak for himself. We are not going to get into trouble here.

Don't let the parenthesis in your Bibles fool you here – what is in there is the most important thing about sight. Those who truly see confess that Jesus is the Messiah, the One who fulfills the whole Bible. This is what it means to see. And when you truly see and publicly confess, you may well be ejected from your religious group (and you should leave before you get ejected!)

So, hey look. He's a grown adult. You ask him. We don't see how this happened.

True sight agrees that Jesus is all the Bible says He is even when that is not understood fully.

The Sinner**(v. 24-34)**

²⁴ 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." ²⁵ He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶ They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷ He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸ And they reviled him, saying, "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 comes from." ³⁰ The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ 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. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴ They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

Second summons – can't be good. What a cynical and snide strategy. "Give glory to God. Don't give credit to this sinner, Jesus." I love this man's responses all through this.

I do not know all that there is to know about Jesus – I do not even have the data to know whether or not He is perfect. But one thing I do know and is unmistakable. He healed me. "I once was blind, but now I see." Grace so amazing...

Suddenly this formerly blind man seems to see so much more than the earth and world and people around him. Repeat my story? Why? Are you ready to believe?

Here is a fundamental blindness: we follow Moses. We will not follow Jesus. Moses we know (no they don't!) but Jesus they don't. If they were truly disciples of Moses, they would have rejoiced to become disciples of Jesus. But they hadn't.

In profound and penetrating logic the man who sees exposes the men who don't. Their spiritual blindness is deep and damning. Yet they wield the power and so, out he goes.

The Son of Man

(v. 35-41)

Here it is – seeing is believing...

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

Here is a mini parallel structure.

The man who desires to believe.

Jesus wants the man to see clearly and believe fully. So he seeks the man out and identifies Himself. He is the Son of Man. He is the One of whom the prophets spoke. Do you see the delicious play – the man has testified that Jesus is a prophet. Jesus puts himself forward as the fulfillment of the prophecies. Over and over again culminating in the book of Daniel, the Old Testament prophets saw the Messiah and the son of Man as one in the same. He is Jesus.

The man who truly believes worships Jesus as Lord.

The One who makes the blind see, and the seeing blind.

Jesus declares his purpose. Through this statement, John wraps up this long section on Jesus being the demarcation between those who believe and those who don't. He has come to give sight to the blind. He has come to those who think they see to show them how blind they truly are.

The religious who think they believe.

So, what are you saying Jesus? Are you saying that we are blind? Yes.

When Jesus uses the word guilt here he is talking both about guilt as conviction, the experience or feeling guilty and about guilt in the judicial sense. He is the judge; they are the guilty. Sadly, their blindness also means deadness – they don't even know they are blind.

Reflect and Respond

How can you come to see? You come to see by admitting that you are poor, blind and wretched. Humbly admit that you are a blind beggar. Believe what Jesus claims and commands. Take the first steps of obedient faith. Then He who is light will have granted you sight.

True spiritual sight then:

Is acknowledging how blind, destitute, poor and needy we are;

Is believing in an obeying way;

Is accepting all that the Bible says Jesus is even when we don't know it all yet;

Is submitting to the Lordship of Christ;

Is rejoicing in what God has done for us;

Is testifying to God's truth even in the face of opposition.

So, are you blind? May the light of the world flood sin darkened blind souls and grant sight.

Do you want to see? Believe in Christ and bow to Him.