*VBC*

*Pastor John Johnson*

*John 9*

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**“Can You See as God Intends You to See?”**

When I was a kid riding on the routes with my father, one of our stops was a newsstand in downtown San Diego.

-I remember this particular stop because it was different from every other one

-the proprietor of the business was blind

-and yet—ironically—I remember how well *he could see*

-no one dared take advantage of him—his other senses were trained to not miss a thing

-in a certain sense—he is a picture of all of us—for we are all a mix of sight and sightlessness

-we miss things that are right in front of us

-we can be blind to someone’s expression—miss that we had hurt them

-lose sight of someone’s kindness—miss the gift of love they just gave us

-most of all—we can be blind to what God might be doing right in front of our eyes

-miss the person He has sent to us—the gift He just gave us

-miss the miracle He has just performed (Illustration—Tuesday)

*-blindness is congenital for all humans*—as John 9 illustrates

-for it is a story of man’s blindness

-a series of scenes—conversations between blind people

-that move to a dramatic climax—inviting us to examine our own impairment

*A. SCENE ONE—THE BLIND MAN* (the impaired, the desperate)

-he is introduced at the beginning—*read verse 1*

-we do not have to guess his blindness—it is obvious

-he was physically blind from birth

-meaning he lived with a certain helplessness and despair from day one

-he could not connect voices with faces, sounds with images

-the only color he knew was black—the only time he experienced was night

-and given ANE culture, he was consigned to living on the streets

-he likely had no career, no marriage, and no income

-no government assistance, food stamps, health care—next to NO HOPE

-until Jesus stepped into his life—and changed everything—*read verses 6-7*

*B. SCENE TWO—THE DISCIPLES* (the students seeking to understand)

-unlike this blind man—they had their physical sight

-but like him—they had vision impairment—*read verse 2*

-so what is it they couldn’t see?

-they couldn’t see desperation and possible healing—all they could see were their theological questions

-like Job’s blind friends, they were blind to their own judgmentalism, assumed a cause and effect with sinful action

-this was something reinforced by Rabbinic teaching—by the Talmud that read*—“There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity”*

-so they grew up assuming illness and disorder are associated with wrongful behavior

-just bad karma

-and it blinded them to compassion—of doing anything for the man

*C. SCENE THREE—THE NEIGHBORS* (the curious, the undecided, the crowd)

-they too had their own issues of sight—*read verses 8-12*

-what is it they could not see?

1. they could not see the man’s identity, recognize his face

-maybe because they never knew what he really looked like

*-we too tend to avoid eye to eye contact with people on the streets*

2. they could see the miracle—but could not see the amazing truth—someone has been set free

-could not see their own possibilities—could He help me?

3. also were blinded by a legalism that was more interest in procedures, protocol

-rather than take him to a party—they took him to the religious authorities—verse 13

D. *SCENE FOUR—THE PARENTS* (the uninvolved, leave us alone relatives)

-they too had vision problems—*read verses 18-23*

-they could see their son—but what is it they could not see?

-they could not see into what he needed at that moment

*-their willingness to stand alongside him*

-rather they lived a kind of “keep your head down—avoid eye contact” life

-they dodged the hard questions—answered those that did not get them in trouble

-recognized that anything they said about Jesus could be used against them

-all they could see were themselves and their self-preservation

E. *SCENE FIVE—THE RELIGIOUS* (the Bible quoting experts)

-those who marketed themselves as men in the know—men with expert vision—but they were the blindest of all

-they could not see the power of God, the hand of God, the love of God that was right in front of their eyes

*-the One Scripture prophesied would come and set the captives free—recovering sight to the blind*

-all they could see were rituals and regulations—*read verse 16*

-in their minds—this was a triple violation—kneading on the Sabbath; healing when it was not life threatening; washing at a pool

-Jesus seems to keep healing on the Sabbath—not to irritate them (well, maybe)

-but to make two points—

1. He is the Lord of the Sabbath

2. the Sabbath is the best day to show the works of God—best day to do works of mercy, works of grace—bring men from suffering to shalom, flourishing

-they remind us that the adversary works to blind men so they cannot see the light of the gospel—2 Corinthians 4:4

-hence Jesus would later refer to them as blind guides (Matthew15:14)

-and warn them later in this story that rejection of Him can lead to permanent blindness

*-for the more a man resists the Light—the deeper becomes the blindness—verse 39*

F. *SCENE SIX—Jesus* (God)—*read verses 35-38*

-what is it He could not see?

-He could see perfectly—can see into the depths of the soul and out into the farthest heavens in the same moment

-His vision has no limitations—He can see our movements, our fears, our hopes, our needs

-nothing escapes His notice—including this healed blind man

-like the healed paralytic in John 5—Jesus could see it was time to step back in to their lives

-in fact—it is clear the blind man serves as the counterpart and contrast to the lame man in John 5[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. both men are incapacitated due to their physical condition—both are desperate beggars

2. both men are approached by Jesus—He comes to them without any request on their part

3. both healings happen apart from faith

4. both healings happen on the Sabbath

5. both men look to the pool for healing

6. both men suffer at the hands of the religious for their healing

7. both men are unsure where Jesus has disappeared to and who He is

8. both men again meet Jesus and are given the opportunity to address deeper issues—live restored lives

-but in contrast— *only the healed blind man responded*

-Jesus asked—do you (in contrast to the paralytic, in contrast to those around you)—do *you* believe in the Son of Man?

-the blind man wants to—but is unsure—he recognizes the familiar voice that told him to wash his eyes—but this is the first time he sees

-and he gathers that Jesus wants him to believe—but he needs what any of us would need—further clarity—who is the Son of Man?

-the term is ambiguous—He uses it again in John 12 with the crowd—and they respond in the same way—“Who is this Son of Man?” (12:34)

-Jesus hides just enough of Himself to require faith—test this man’s willingness to believe—give him space to develop and articulate faith—as He does with us

-and yet—the title is not new—it was an existing concept

1. it was an OT designation of One who is coming

-Daniel used it to describe One who would come with the clouds, with authority to rule, set things to rights—7:13-14

-there’s a more important reason why Jesus used this title

2. it was Jesus’ favorite self—designation—He referred to Himself this way to skeptics (Nathanael—1:51), seekers (Nicodemus—3:13), the crowd (6:27), and His disciples (13:31)

-perhaps because it best expresses the central mission of Jesus—God becoming a man to identify and save

-and the healed blind man believed

*THE APPLICATION*

-so what is John using this conversation to teach us?

-who is Jesus speaking to in the church?

-it is a question we have asked in every conversation—

-He speaks with the skeptics, the seekers, the outsiders, the insiders, the hurting, the fans, the believing unbelievers

*-so who does the blind man represent?*

-maybe he represents in the community the RECEPTIVE

-that person who just needs someone to take him/her to the last step

-the person who has sensed something of God at work in his life from the beginning

-what else explains his impressiveness—His gradual coming to Jesus at every turn until He is at Jesus’ feet?[[2]](#endnote-2)

1. he was inclined to obedience—even though what Jesus asked him to do was counter intuitive—pressing dirt in eyes that cannot see—verse 7

2. he gave the credit to Jesus to anyone who asked—verse 11

3. stood up and defended Jesus to the religious establishment—standing his ground in the face of intimidation by the religious power brokers of his time

4. dared to call him a prophet to those who hated Jesus—verse 17

5. was bold to ask the question that is the question of the gospels—“Do you want to be His disciples?”—verse 27

6. risked being thrown out, excommunicated for challenging them—and was tossed out—verse 34

-but he had gone as far as he could go—he needed an invitation to take the last step

-someone to ask—are you ready to believe? Is there anything else holding you back?

-he then crossed a gulf from uncertainty to loving, grateful trust

-and then he did what no one else had done—be it Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the paralytic, the crowd, the family, the believing unbelievers

-did what no one else will do prior to the resurrection in John’s story

-did what proved he was a true believer—he worshipped!

*CONCLUSION*

-when I placed my faith in Christ—it came after a long journey of grace

-there were these God moments

-Black Forest camp at age 8

-moved to come forward in a service at age 10

-drew close to God in Middle School camp at age 12

-God was doing something—like this man, I was moving from perceiving Jesus as a man, a prophet, a religious figure

*-but nothing really happened until someone followed up with me and asked—do you believe?*

-do you believe the world’s Creator loved the world so much that He came in the person of His Son and died for me and rose to confront and defeat the power of evil

-I was 16—it was then I began to order my life around God’s truth

-lay aside other priorities—gradually—step by step

-maybe you are at this juncture

-maybe there is someone in your life just waiting for you to ask—do you believe?

1. Culpepper, 140 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Bruner, 561 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)