

## INTRODUCTION

If you are the kind of person who likes to keep records, this is the 40<sup>th</sup> message from our verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of John. It's the amazing story of the how Jesus healed a man who was born blind.

Being from Alabama, I'm familiar with one of the sports heroes of the state. His name was Charley Boswell and he is a member of the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame. Charley was blinded in World War II when he was rescuing a fellow soldier from a burning tank. He never let his blindness slow him down. He won the national blind golfers tournament thirteen times. In fact, the oldest golf course in Alabama is named after him.

In 1958 Charley was given the Ben Hogan award. He came to the Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth to receive the award. He was thrilled to meet the great Ben Hogan. Charley told Ben that it was always his dream to play a round of golf with him. Ben said, "I'd be happy to play with you." Charley said, "But we've got to play for some money for the winner." Ben said, "I don't think that would be fair." Charley said, "I insist. Let's play for \$100." Ben Hogan, "Well, okay. I just want you to know I'm going to play my best. Just name the time and the place." Charley smiled and said, "Let's play here at your course, and we'll tee off a little after midnight." Of course, Charley was just bluffing him.

This message is entitled "The Blind Man's Bluff." The original meaning of that phrase comes from a child's game that is much like playing tag. In Blind Man's Bluff, the person who is "it" wears a blindfold and tries to tag someone else playing the game.

In John 9 the Apostle John records the story of how the formerly blind man was hauled before the Jewish leaders. They wanted to interrogate him so they could find a reason to arrest and kill Jesus. But he wasn't intimidated. The blind man called their bluff and didn't back down. As a result, he was kicked out of his synagogue.

This is a rather long passage of scripture, so instead of reading it all at once, I'm going to divide it up into four bite-sized pieces. And there is a personal lesson that we can learn from each section.

John 9:13-16. They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. Then the Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight.

"He put mud on my eyes," he told them. "I washed and I can see."

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a sinful man perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.

## **1. When you break man-made religious rules, you'll be criticized.**

The Pharisees criticized Jesus because He refused to obey the man-made rules about the Sabbath. In the time of Jesus, Jewish rabbis had taken a simple commandment, "remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy." And had added hundreds of trivial regulations through the oral law and the Talmud. What God had intended as a Sabbath blessing they had turned into a Sabbath burden.

We still have religious Pharisees who not only want to follow every letter of the law of God—they add more letters to it. That's called legalism. When you add man-made rules to God's law and treat those rules as binding as the Bible, you live in bondage.

People today are still making man-made rules about the Sabbath Day. When I grew up, people called Sunday the Sabbath, and we weren't allowed to play sports in our yard. We had to sit around all afternoon after church and be miserable. That's not in the Bible.

There are even people who consider themselves Christians who criticize us because we worship on Sunday instead of Saturday. They observe the Sabbath on Saturday like the Jews do and they expect all Christians to follow their belief. I have been told by some of these Sabbath proponents that the mark of the beast mentioned in Revelation 13 is Sunday worship. I'm not criticizing them. I don't mind if they worship on Sunday or every other Tuesday. I just don't think they should criticize other Christians who worshipping on Sunday. We worship on Sunday because that was the day of the resurrection morning. But we don't believe that Sunday is the Jewish Sabbath. The Bible never says that.

When you live under grace and refuse to obey these man-made regulations, prepare to be criticized. They criticized Jesus and they will criticize you.

We uncover the second lesson in John 9:17-25: Again they asked the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?" "He's a prophet," he said.

The Jews did not believe this about him—that he was blind and received sight—until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight.

They asked them, "Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

"We know this is our son and that he was born blind," his parents answered. "But we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he's of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed him as the Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue. This is why his parents said, "He's of age; ask him."

So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner."

He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!"

The second lesson we learn from this interaction between the healed man and the religious leaders is this:

## **2. When you meet Jesus, you'll have a strong testimony.**

The Jewish leaders summoned the man's parents to cross examine them. It's obvious they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. They didn't want to be kicked out of the synagogue. When questioned, they did the Texas two-step and said, "Ask our son, he's an adult."

So they called him back in and interrogated him again. It's interesting in this entire dialogue, not once do the Pharisees use the name "Jesus." Instead, five times they call him "this man." I think they avoided mentioning the name Jesus, or Yeshua, because it means "God saves." And we all know there is power in the name of Jesus. So his enemies refused to even use the name Jesus.

They said, "This man isn't from God. He breaks the Sabbath." Again they said, "This man is a sinner." But the man with a miracle refused to be drawn into a theological debate. He would have lost that. But he responded to them with irrefutable truth. He said, "I don't know everything. But there is one thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see."

What a powerful, simple testimony.

Someone has said the person with an experience will always win over someone who only has an argument. One of the greatest spiritual assets you possess is your personal testimony. You may not be an authority on theology, but you are the authority on what God has done in your life.

In 1 Peter 3:15 the Bible says we should, "Be ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." The best way to do that is to share your testimony of a changed life. Are you ready to do that?

If you aren't, let me tell you how to give your testimony. Every believer has a testimony. If you haven't ever done it, you should write out your personal testimony so you can share it in two or three minutes. Just take a piece of paper or open a doc on your device. And write three lines. Line one is "My life before I met Christ." Then skip down some space and write "How I met the Lord." Then skip down and write, "My life since I started following Jesus."

Then go back fill in the spaces. First, write out what your life was like before Christ. If you're like me, and you became a Christian when you were a child, you don't have a long laundry list of sins. I never robbed a bank or served time in prison before the Lord. But I can recall that before

I gave my life to Christ as a boy, I was totally self-centered and I had a fear of what would happen after I died.

Then write out how you came to Christ. For me, it was on a Sunday evening in my home church. That night the preacher spoke on the crucifixion of Jesus. I had heard all about that before, but that was the first time that I realized it was my sin that sent Jesus to the cross. So when the pastor gave the invitation, I went forward and gave my life to Jesus. I was baptized two weeks later. I can still remember the joy of knowing my sins were forgiven.

Then you complete your testimony by writing about how your life has changed since you came to faith in Christ. Give some specific examples of how God has demonstrated His love and power in your life. For me, I've been walking with the Lord for over fifty years. It hasn't been a problem-free walk, but I have found that God's grace is sufficient.

When both my parents were dying of cancer, God gave me the strength and grace to walk through that grief. And the older I get, the more I realize just how faithful God is. I really do believe that every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.

I encourage you to write out your testimony. As the man in our story said, "This one thing I know. Once I was blind and now I see."

Now let's discover the next lesson by reading John 9:26-34: Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

"I already told you," he said, "and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? [now we come to the blind man's bluff: He is almost taunting them.] You don't want to become his disciples too, do you?"

They ridiculed him: "You're that man's disciple, but we're Moses's disciples. We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man—we don't know where he's from."

"This is an amazing thing!" the man told them. "You don't know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything."

"You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

Here's the third personal lesson that we can take away from this conversation:

### **3. When Jesus transforms you, you'll face opposition.**

Once they realize they couldn't attack the reality of his changed life, they start attacking him personally. They said, "You were all together born in sin. Get out of here!" And they kicked him out. They circled back around to the faulty belief that God had made him be born blind because of some terrible sin in his life. So he was excommunicated from the synagogue.

Just remember that when your life has been radically changed by Jesus not everyone will be happy about it. You'll face persecution and opposition.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:12, "Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ."

We are living in the first post-Christian culture in the history of the world. For the first 2,000 years after Christ, everyone believed that objective truth existed out there, transcendent from us. And what we had inside were feelings. And when we were confronted with the truth, we changed our feelings to fit the truth. God's word says certain behavior is sinful, so we changed our behavior to fit that truth.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the first generation that has reversed this. Most Americans say, "Truth is whatever I feel." And out there are just ancient fables that don't matter anymore. Truth is subjective. That way, I can believe whatever I want and that's the truth.

Then you have us, people who are committed to the truth found in the Word of God. We are going to face increased opposition and persecution because what we are saying is considered intolerant, and even hate speech—so now we have become the bad guys. But our calling is to speak the truth in love.

So if you are going to stand up for Jesus, prepare to be rejected. Many Christians, especially young people and young adults, can't resist the peer pressure. They want to be accepted by their friends, so they make a decision to reject the truth of the Bible to go along with the popular culture's definition of truth. If you stand for truth, like this blind man did, you are going to be kicked out of the popular crowd.

Years ago D.C. Talk had a song entitled "Jesus Freak." They expressed the fear that many people have about what will happen when you go all the way with Jesus. The lyrics said: "What will people think; When they hear that I'm a Jesus freak; What will people do when they find out that it's true? I don't really care if they label me a Jesus freak; There ain't no disguising the truth." The bridge said: "People say I'm strange, does it make me a stranger? That my best friend was born in a manger? People say I'm strange, does it make me a stranger. That my best friend was born in a manger."

If you are radically committed to Jesus, the world will call you worst things than a Jesus-freak. Are you prepared to suffer insult and injury for Jesus?

Let's look at the final lesson in John 9:35-38: Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, and when he found him, he asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?" he asked. Jesus answered, "You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him.

The final lesson we can dig out of this passage is:

#### **4. When you see Jesus clearly, you'll worship Him as God.**

This is my favorite part of this miracle. The Jewish leaders kicked him out but Jesus sought him out. I'm glad Jesus still goes after outcasts. Now think about it. The man hadn't seen the face of Jesus until this point. Jesus put the mud on his eyes and sent him down to the pool of Siloam to wash it off. When he did, he could see for the first time in his life. What an amazing miracle. I'd like for us to try to replicate it for just a moment. So I'm going to ask everyone to close your eyes for five seconds. Now just imagine all you had ever seen was darkness all of your life. Now open your eyes and look at someone. Just imagine how your life would be changed.

But the biggest miracle that day wasn't when Jesus opened his eyes to see. The biggest miracle was when Jesus opened the eyes of his heart and he believed.

Did you notice the gradual steps of belief? He went through several stages before salvation. When his friends questioned him he said, "A man named Jesus told me to wash off the mud." Then when the Pharisees pressed him, he said, "He is a prophet." Then he said, "He is from God." And then he said, "No one has ever done a miracle like this before."

But it wasn't until he saw Jesus clearly that he began to worship Him as God. "He said, "Lord I believe!" And he bowed down. That's what the word worship means, *proskuneo*, to fall on your knees in submission and worship.

Where are you on that road? Is Jesus just a man, or a prophet, or even a miracle worker in your opinion? When you truly see Jesus for who He is you will worship Him as God.

Worship should be reserved for God alone. When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, Satan said, "I'll give you all the riches of the planet if you will bow down and worship me." Satan was a liar—it wasn't his to give. But Jesus rejected the offer and quoted Deuteronomy 6. He said, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

But when this man healed of blindness worshipped Jesus as God, Jesus didn't object. He accepted worship because He is God.

We're a lot like that man with a miracle. None of us have ever seen Jesus, but He came to seek and to save us. Then He performs the miracle of opening the eyes of our heart and we see Him and worship Him as God.

## **CONCLUSION**

Billy Graham used to tell the story of a famous actor who was being honored with a banquet. The actor was a Christian, so when he was asked to give a reading, he chose the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. He read it in a dramatic way with a deep voice that modulated to bring out the beauty of the Psalm. When he concluded, everyone applauded the actor's performance.

Then the actor asked his long-time pastor to read the same Psalm. The old pastor stood and quoted the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm from memory. He spoke the words with assurance that was filled with love for God. When he finished, there was no applause. There were tears in the eyes of the audience. The actor walked over to his pastor and said, "Sir, it's obvious that I know the Psalm, but you know the Shepherd."

So what about you? Has the Good Shepherd opened the eyes of your heart so you can know Him? If so, you will worship Him as God.

## OUTLINE

1. When you break man-made religious rules, you'll be criticized.

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath." *John 9:16*

2. When you meet Jesus, you'll have a strong testimony.

He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!"  
*John 9:25*

3. When Jesus transforms you, you'll face opposition.

"You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out. *John 9:34*

4. When you see Jesus clearly, you'll worship Him as God.

"I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped him. *John 9:38*



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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