

Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank you for your ***HOLY SPIRIT*** who illuminates the ***UNDERSTANDING***. We thank you for the power of Jesus Christ's ***WORD*** that reaches the ***HEART***. We thank you that you are a father who speaks to his children and we pray, our Father, that you will come to us now in the power of your ***WORD***. Gather us near to yourself, whisper your truth to us, open our hearts and our eyes and our ears. Humble our wills, clarify your ***TRUTH***. And so, grant by your Holy Spirit, that in these moments we too may be able to say, "Once I was blind, but now I see." We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated.

Now as we continue our studies in the gospel according to John, we come this morning to the great ***NINTH CHAPTER*** of John's gospel, and we're going to begin to read that chapter at verse one: John's gospel, chapter nine and beginning to read at verse one. The reading is in the pew Bible, page 895. Let us hear God's word.

*As Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from birth, and his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born* ***BLIND****?" Jesus answered. "It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be* ***DISPLAYED*** *in 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* ***'SENT'****). 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's 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.' 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 had formerly been 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, 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. 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? 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. For the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of 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? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I've told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also 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, 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 in the last few weeks, a number of our members---whom I judge to be serious, steadfast, and sober citizens of Columbia and also members in good standing of this church have said to me---variously--- "There are times in church when I want to stand up and ***CHEER***... I want to stand up and ***CHEER***." Well, there are ***TWO PROBLEMS*** with that. ***#1)*** is that we Presbyterians are not by nature overly ***DEMONSTRATIVE*** (although I wouldn't mind seeing a video of the crowd at the USC/Clemson game sometime, to spot some of our members on those occasions). And of course, ***#2)*** the real problem is that we would all want to cheer at ***DIFFERENT MOMENTS***, and consequently it would be difficult for us to continue with the service. But if we could all be got to cheer at one in the same moment, then everything could be done decently and in order, couldn't it?

***John Chapter 9: A Dramatic Healing by the Light of the World***

But if ever there was a chapter in John's gospel---or indeed the Bible--- to make you want to stand up and cheer, this is surely it. Jesus ***HEALING THE BLIND MAN***. We are at a point in the gospel of John, which right at the beginning we said is of all four gospels, the most ***SYMPHONIC*** of the gospels. It begins with the magnificent ***OVERTURE*** that we call the ***PROLOGUE***, where John gives us indications and hints of some of the great themes and motifs that he will work through his glorious symphony. And we are really in a movement in that symphony where John is picking up the words from the introduction to the gospel that, *"the* ***LIGHT OF THE WORLD*** *was coming into the world and the darkness was not able to overcome it."* Jesus is at the ***FEAST OF BOOTHS*** (or 'Tabernacles') in Jerusalem, a feast when the people celebrated God giving ***WATER*** in the Exodus narrative in the days of the wilderness wandering, and God giving ***LIGHT*** to lead them in the dark and through the day, eventually into the promised land. And Jesus has said that he is, *“The one who gives satisfying* ***WATER*** *in the gift of the* ***HOLY SPIRIT****, and he is the one who is the* ***LIGHT OF THE WORLD****, and those who follow him will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.”*

And so, there's something unusually fitting about the fact that, as it seems to me, at the end of this water and light festival, Jesus---who again describes himself as ***THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD***--- gives sight to a man who has been blinded from birth. And in a marvelous way---as is his purpose in this particular miracle, as he makes very clear---he is not only teaching about the transforming power of the kingdom, but he is demonstrating that the king is present in his kingly power... that his ***WORDS*** are ***TRUE***, because his ***ACTIONS*** transform.

And so, there unfolds this wonderfully dramatic story of the ***HEALING***---the giving of sight to the man who has been born blind. And the very ***FIRST THING*** obviously that we see in this passage is the Lord Jesus ***GRACE*** In this miraculous transformation. It's interesting to overhear the conversation with which this whole miracle began. The disciples see this man and somehow, they find out that he has been blind from birth. But do you notice they see him as a kind of ***CASE***---they see him as an illustration of an intractable intellectual ***PROBLEM***. Did this ***MAN*** sin so that he is blind, or is he blind because of his ***PARENTS'*** sin? They are looking for the ***CAUSE*** that lies behind the man's blindness. And do you notice how Jesus says you need to look at this man with a ***DIFFERENT*** pair of eyes---not to ask questions about the ***CAUSE*** of his blindness, but what I want you to see is the glorious ***PURPOSE*** of God in healing his blindness.

And so, he says, it's not a matter of whether this man sinned or whether this man's parents sinned. It is how are the ***PURPOSES OF GOD*** going to be fulfilled and manifested in this person's life? How is God going to be ***GLORIFIED*** in this situation? And in parenthesis, let me say that's how Jesus' people think about difficult situations. Jesus' people do not stop to ask the question, "Can I untangle the cause? Can I answer the question? Now exactly why is this happening?" Jesus' people's ***FIRST*** reaction to an intractable, difficult situation is to ask the question, "How does God mean to ***GLORIFY*** himself in this situation?" Isn't that the case? So, that when we pray for those who are in need and facing difficulties---when we pray for those who are sick---we're not simply interested in the medical causes or the accidental causes, as though every ***SICKNESS*** and every ***DISEASE*** were simply a matter of tragedy that we were to lament over.

But Jesus' people---whose eyes have been opened to the way in which the Lord Jesus is working in the world to glorify his heavenly Father---are asking the question, "In what way is this going to ***ADVANCE*** the purposes of God in this person's life, in our church fellowship, in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ? How can God be ***GLORIFIED*** in this situation?"

But of course, there is far ***MORE*** than that in this amazing miracle that Jesus performs, and the ***SIGNIFICANCE*** of it seems to lie in our Lord's most unusual ***ACTION***. Earlier on in John's gospel, when Jesus heals, Jesus heals with a ***WORD***. Jesus does not need to make paste and rub it on this man's eyes and send him to Siloam in order that he may see. No, Jesus is, as it were, acting out a ***PARABLE*** for this man---not only that he may see, but that he may see what it is that Jesus has wanted to do in his life.

***A Marvelous Transformation of the Blind Man***

Now, ***WHY*** does he do this? Why does he stoop down, gather some of the dust of the earth, spit into it, make paste, put it on the man's eyes, and send him to the pool of ***SILOAM***, which you notice, John says very tellingly, "***SILOAM MEANS 'SENT'***." Now we don't need to know that, do we? We don't need to know... so why does John tell us that? Well, here is what Jesus is doing. Don't you think... don't you think he is actually re-enacting in miniature parable form, the original ***CREATION OF MAN***, when God took some of the dust of the earth.

Now in these controversial areas, let me remind you that you and I were created of the ***DUST OF THE EARTH***. You understand that: God made you from the ***DUST*** of the earth. That's what God made Adam from: from ***DUST***. That's what the Bible says. He made man from the ***DUST*** of the earth... and he bowed down. And as he did whatever God did with the ***DUST*** of the earth, he breathed into him ***THE BREATH OF LIFE***, and man became a living being. That's in Genesis chapter two verse seven. And that's what Jesus is doing. He's ***STOOPING*** into the dust, and he's ***BREATHING*** into the dust, and then he's putting that ***PASTE*** on the man's eyes. It's all a ***SYMBOL***, as it were, with a kind of background aura, that Jesus is now going to do in ***MINATURE***---to this man's eyes, in this man's life---what God did right at the very ***BEGINNING***... that Jesus is here engaged in a wonderful act of ***RECREATION***... of ***REGENERATION***. And of course, as we've been reading through John's gospel, we're reminded of what Jesus said to Nicodemus: unless somebody is ***BORN***, unless somebody is ***CREATED ANEW*** from the one who comes from ***ABOVE***, he'll never be able to ***SEE*** the kingdom of God!

And do you notice ***WHERE HE SENDS HIM***? Because this pool has featured before. This is the pool to which the priests and the congregation went in the great ***WATER CEREMONY*** at the Feast of Tabernacles. They would go ***DOWN*** and they would draw water out of the pool of ***SILOAM***, and they would bring it back to the temple and they would pour it down the sacrificial altar. It was all a symbol of the way in which God had promised to satisfy their deepest ***THIRST*** from the pool that was called ***'SENT'***. But the feast was ***OVER*** and their thirst was not satisfied, because in the purposes of God, it wasn't the POOL that was sent. It was ***JESUS*** who was sent. The verb ***'TO SEND'*** occurs in John's gospel about 65 times, and 2/3 of those occasions, it's got to do with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, in this marvelous, acted ***PARABLE***, Jesus at the end of the feast is saying, *"I am the one who gives* ***LIGHT*** *to blinded eyes. I am the one who has been* ***SENT*** *by the Father to give the satisfaction and the blessing of* ***NEW LIFE*** *by his mighty power."* And this miraculous ***TRANSFORMATION*** is therefore a glorious ***PICTURE*** of how the gospel works in our lives. Once we were ***BLIND*** by nature; and now by ***GRACE***, we are reborn and we ***SEE***, and the ***FIRST*** person we go to is ***JESUS***.

***A Series of Vicious Interrogations***

But you notice what follows immediately. There is the miraculous transformation and it's followed by a series of ***VICIOUS INTERROGATIONS***. Remember the words of John chapter one, *"The light* ***SHINES*** *in the darkness, and the darkness has not been able to* ***EXTINGUISH*** *it.”* And this is what the ***DARKNESS*** is doing here. It's seeking to extinguish the ***LIGHT*** of the Lord Jesus.

***#1) Interrogation by the Man's Neighbors***

And so, we have a whole ***SERIES OF INTERVIEWS*** here. There are four of them in quick succession. ***FIRST*** of all, ***1)*** the man is interviewed by his ***NEIGHBORS***, and they understandably are confused as his whole face has been changed. *"Is this the* ***BLIND*** *man?" "Yes."..."No, it looks like the* ***BLIND*** *man." "I am the* ***BLIND*** *man." "No, it looks like..." "No, I am the* ***BLIND*** *man."* And the text says he kept saying to them, *"But I am the* ***BLIND*** *man."* You see, ***THEY*** were ***BLIND*** to the blind man because they couldn't ***SEE*** what Jesus had done. In a way you can understand them. But the marvelous thing is the ***POISE*** of this man who has met Jesus. He stands out among his neighbors. So, ***HOW*** has this happened? *"He put paste on my eyes. I went to the pool. I washed, and now I SEE.* *It’s as simple as that. Don't you* ***'SEE'****? It's as simple as that.”*

***#2) Interrogation by the Pharisees***

And so, they rush him off to ***#2)*** the ***PHARISEES***. Now, we've met these people before. We've met these people before on the same day of the week---the day of the week when they're wandering around Jerusalem on the ***SABBATH DAY*** with their little book in their rear pocket that says, *'39 Ways to Catch Sabbath Breakers'*. And so, *"****WHEN*** *did this happen? This morning? Oh, oh, this morning! It's the* ***SABBATH****!!"*

And they look up in their little book. Now it's page 14, section two, subsection B, sub-subsection one: *"You should not be* ***KNEADING****"...(*K-N-E-A-D-I-N-G) ...*"you should not be* ***KNEADING*** *on the* ***SABBATH DAY****, because it is* ***WORK****! Kneading on the Sabbath Day: a little* ***DUST****, a little* ***SPITTLE****, a little* ***PASTE****: this guy was kneading on the* ***SABBATH DAY****!"* And bedlam breaks out because some of them were ***GOOD*** men and ***TRUE*** men. And they said, *"If he were not from God, he would not be able to do this marvelous thing."*

But look again at the ***SIMPLICITY*** of the man's testimony. *"The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight, and he said to them, ‘He put* ***MUD*** *in my eyes, and I* ***WASHED****, and I* ***SEE****!’"* And they're so ***BLIND*** they can't see it.

***#3) Interrogation of the Man's Parents***

And so, they do what I regard as the absolutely ***UNFORGIVEABLE***. They get this poor man's ***PARENTS***, who are intimidated out of their minds. John tells us---because it was well known in Jerusalem---that if you confessed the Lord Jesus or had an interest in the Lord Jesus, you would be ***EXCOMMUNICATED***. And that meant you would lose everything. And so, they get this poor man's ***PARENTS***. You see how subtle and how sinister they are. They can't get this good man, whom Jesus has transformed, ***DOWN***. So, they get him through the people that he loves most of all, and they seek to ***INTIMIDATE*** them. It's absolutely unforgivable. But, you see, the forces that range themselves against the Lord Jesus will use any ***PRESSURE***. They are not governed by the rules of war. And the marvelous thing is that in some ways they stand up to the Pharisees as well, and say, *"He's old enough, you can go and ask* ***HIM****."*

***#4) The Man Interrogated Again***

So, they drag in the man again (verses 24 through 34), which is the startling beginning. *"The* ***SECOND*** *time they called the man who had been* ***BLIND*** *and said to him... "* Now here's the moderator of the general assembly. And they're all there. They're all there in their Pharisaical clothing. They're all the men of high dignity in Jerusalem. And this poor man, who's never been able to read a word of Hebrew--- not a jot or a tittle of Hebrew has he ever seen with his eyes until this day---and he stands before them. And the moderator says, *"Pious, pious, hypocrite. Give God the glory. We know this man's a sinner"*... you see. And he's there on his own... he doesn't know who is for him in this crowd. And the moderator is substituting ***PIOUS WORDS*** for ***SAVING*** ***POWER***. They have never helped this man any single day apparently. And they show their true colors. Verse 28, *"They* ***REVILED*** *him."*

Do you remember ***SOMEBODY ELSE*** they ***REVILED***? You see how this man is becoming like the Lord Jesus and receiving the same treatment as the Lord Jesus. They ***REVILED*** him. What would you have felt like in this situation knowing that all your ***SOCIAL CONNECTIONS*** were at stake, that your ***LIVELIHOOD*** was at stake, that everything that you counted ***PRECIOUS*** was at stake? And there ***REVILING*** him.

Now, watch this man in verse 27. "He answered them. *‘I have told you already, and you would not listen.' It's not that it's difficult to understand what's happened to me. It's not that there's a great problem here. It's that I've told you before and* ***YOU WOULD NOT LISTEN****!"* And his ***BOLDNESS*** increases. Look at what he says in the middle of the verse. *"Do you want to hear it again? Do you?"* He's almost taunting them now, isn't he? *"Do you want to become his disciples too?"* What a scene. Somebody should make a Hollywood movie out of this man's life. They're arrayed there. They're angry there. They're hostile there. They're intimidating there. And he says to them, *"It's your real interest that you would like to become his disciples too? That's what I would like to do. Would you like to do that?"* And this poor man has become like one of those ***PROPHETS*** of the Old Testament who from time to time will taunt the unbelievers and show them the real nature of their ***UNBELIEF***... and they get ***FURIOUS***.

And then he says even more boldly in verse 30. *"This is an amazing thing! You don't know where he comes... you don't know where he comes from, but yet he opened my eyes! You're supposed to know* ***EVERYTHING****, you lot."*

And they answered him. You see, this is their resort: ***LIES***, ***INTIMIDATION***. "They answered him, *'You were born in utter sin, and you would teach us?' And they cast..."* Now, that doesn't just mean they removed him from the meeting, that means they ***EXCOMMUNICATED*** him---that's what it means. This man was excommunicated from the *'First Synagogue in Jerusalem'*.

***A Wonderful Confession***

But then these beautiful words that lead us to the ***THIRD*** element in this passage. ***1)*** There is an amazing, miraculous ***TRANSFORMATION***. ***2)*** There is a ***VICIOUS INTIMIDATION***. And it all leads to ***3)*** a wonderful ***CONFESSION***. But look at the words that I think are so beautiful here in verse 35, Jesus... ah, Jesus,.. ah, Jesus, *"Jesus heard that they had cast him out,* ***AND HAVING******FOUND HIM****..."… "Master, the man you healed, they've excommunicated. 'Ah,'* says Jesus, *'I must find him. I must go to him. I must embrace him.' "* This is absolutely marvelous.

And so, Jesus ***COMES TO HIM*** and he says to him, *"Do you believe in the son of man?"* That's interesting to see what this ***UNNAMED MAN***--- isn't that interesting? This ***UNNMAED MAN***. I wonder if you noticed in our reading this kind of ***PROGRESS*** in the way in which he thinks about Jesus. In verse 11, Jesus is the ***MAN*** who healed him. In verse 17, Jesus is a ***PROPHET*** who speaks from God. In verse 33, he understands that Jesus is the ***ONE THAT GOD HAS SENT*** to save him. And now, the Lord Jesus is bringing him, as it were, to ***FULL SPIRITUAL SIGHT***. And he says to the man, *"Dear friend, do you believe in the* ***SON OF MAN****?"...* the great language that Jesus himself used about himself as the great figure of Daniel chapter seven who would receive the ***KINGDOM*** and bring ***SALVATION*** and ***RESTORE*** order and give ***BLESSING*** to all those who belong to is kingdom? *"Do you believe in the* ***SON OF MAN****?"* And the man is ***EAGER*** to believe in the ***SON OF MAN***! He says, *"Lord,"* he says, *"who is he that I may believe in Him??"* And then these beautiful, beautiful, beautiful words of Jesus. *"You have* ***SEEN*** *him, and it is the one who is* ***SPEAKING*** *to you.* ***I AM HE****."* And he says, do you notice, "***LORD***," Verse 38, "I ***BELIEVE***!" *"And he* ***WORSHIPPED*** *him."* He worshiped him!!

***The Teaching of This Chapter to Us***

Now, just stand back for a moment from all this. What is the chapter ***TEACHING*** us? Jesus is the ***LIGHT OF THE WORLD***. Jesus is the one who ***OPENS*** the eyes of those who have been born ***BLIND***---not simply ***PHYSICALLY*** without sight, but ***SPIRITUALLY*** without sight. When Jesus ***OPENS*** blind eyes, we come to ***BELIEVE*** in him. We come to ***TRUST*** him. We become ***WORSHIPPERS*** of him. And if this man's story is anything to go by, we become ever increasingly ***EMBOLDENED*** to bear witness to him. And we are prepared as the apostle Paul says, who I suspect was also ***EXCOMMUNICATED*** from this same city in Jerusalem. We become prepared to count everything as ***LOSS*** by comparison with the excellency of the ***KNOWLEDGE*** of knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

And so, here was a man who would have been able to ***SING*** and ***ADVANCE***---indeed, he gave him the idea---the great hymn of John Newton. "I was ***BLIND***. But now I ***SEE***." And I don't know about you, but I want to stand up and ***CHEER*** for this Jesus and say to him, "Lord, I ***BELIEVE***," and ***WORSHIP*** him.

***A Sober Ending to This Passage***

But do you notice how tellingly and ***SOBERLY*** Jesus ends this passage? Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, "Are we also ***BLIND***?" Jesus said to them, *"If you were physically* ***BLIND****, then you would have no guilt. But now that you say, 'We are the ones who* ***SEE****,' your guilt* ***REMAINS****."*

So, the question is, "Am I really able to ***SING***, 'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound?'" You see millions of people ***SING*** that and don't ***SEE***. Do we ***SING*** it: *"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was* ***LOST****, but now I'm* ***FOUND****... was* ***BLIND****, but now I* ***SEE****."*

My dear friends, if that's ***TRUE*** of us, we don't need long ***SENTENCES***. We don't need dramatic ***WORDS***. We don't need dramatic ***STORIES***. All we ***NEED*** to do---and you ought to do it sometime soon---is just say to somebody, "I was ***BLIND***, but now I ***SEE***." Say it to somebody here and they'll know what you're talking about. “***OH***... do you ***SEE***??”

 "Heavenly Father, we are in awe of what you did in this blind man's life, and we pray that by the power of your son---our savior, Jesus Christ---you will repeat in us the wonderful transformation you wrought in Him. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen."