

“Falling into the Arms of the Savior: spiritual blindness”

Scripture: John 9:1-41

Graphic: blindness, sight, mud, trust, falling

Key Verses: John 4:26 Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Theme: When we claim to see, then we are open to pride and sin. When we close our eyes and trust in Jesus, our sin is forgiven and we see clearly. Blindness is not determined simply by seeing or not seeing, but by recognizing the revelation of God’s work in Jesus. Jesus gave physical and then spiritual sight to a blindman, not for HIS sake, but so God’s power and glory could be revealed.

1) Introduction

- a) Falling into the arms of the Savior...that’s our current sermon series about trusting the redemptive – the saving – work of Jesus Christ on the cross and finding hope because of His resurrection.
- b) We’re getting closer to Easter...can you feel it? Can you feel the anticipation rising as we start to talk about the empty tomb...the garden...the disciples’ shock? This is going to be great!
- c) But not for everybody...
- d) See, Easter’s just another day for some...the world around us gets it a little – enough to eat about 300 million tons of candy. Not the point, right?
- e) So what is it that is present in the lives of those who don’t understand the implications of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity (Father, SON, and Holy Spirit) who came as a baby, lived to establish the Kingdom of God, was tortured and murdered as God’s final plan to offer the world forgiveness for our sin, and who rose again to prove that He transcends death?
- f) What ailment, or disease, or condition is present in all of us that makes the truth about Jesus hard for us to see? That makes it hard for us to fall into the arms of Jesus?
- g) Well, if you can’t see, we call that blindness. But this is not about physical blindness, but spiritual blindness. Spiritual blindness prevents us from seeing – from understanding – the fullness of Jesus...of God’s work in Him.
- h) And before we get to what God’s Word has to say about it, let me just lay out three levels of spiritual blindness with which we struggle. I’ll go into these in more detail in a moment, but to get us oriented this morning...

- i) First, spiritual blindness is the inability or unwillingness to “see” (and when I use the term ‘see’ here, I mean believe or understand in whatever capacity we have)...number 1, spiritual blindness is the inability or unwillingness to **see the saving work of God through Jesus.**
- ii) Second, spiritual blindness is the inability or unwillingness to “see” **Jesus as Lord.**
- iii) Finally, it’s the inability or unwillingness to “see” that **God has gifted you, specifically, and wants you to use those gifts to serve Him** more and more as you grow in faith.
- i) And we’ll talk about the causes of this spiritual blindness and then get real about the places in which we find our blind spots, even as faithful followers of Jesus.
- j) The road Jesus has been traveling has brought him into encounters with people who struggle with the same things we do – Jesus met the devil and wrestled with temptation; Jesus met Nicodemus who doubted what Jesus was saying. The woman at the well felt deep isolation, but Jesus told her the truth. Today, Jesus encounters a blind man, heals him of his physical blindness, but, more importantly, shows him the truth about who He is...
- k) Again, long passage today, so let’s dive in...
- l) Before we do, let’s invite God to open our eyes and ears right now...
- m) Turn with me to the gospel of John, chapter 9...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 1-5

- i) Sickness, in the ancient near east, was commonly associated with sin. It’s like, if you had some kind of ailment, it was common folklore to believe that because you were sick, there was some unrepented SIN in your life.
- ii) Now, there are times when this connection might hold true. If I drink alcohol in excess, it will lead to liver and heart disease. If I have sex with multiple partners or outside the marriage bounds, chances are, I will get some disease. Both sinful actions leading to disease. And those are just the physical issues...there are also psychological, spiritual, and emotional implications to our actions.

- iii) Other times, people have conditions that have no sinful cause, really, they just happen. Some birth defects, or diseases that develop in us like cancer and heart problems...they sometimes just happen.
- iv) Jesus, here, rejects the link between sin and this man's blindness, not because there was NO WAY there was a link, but because that's not the point.
- v) Jesus said that the man wasn't born blind because of sin, BUT SO THAT GOD'S works might be revealed in him. This man has been enduring a lifetime of blindness and begging! And Jesus tells his disciples that the REASON for his suffering is so that God's work could be revealed!?
- vi) Don't tell the blind guy that! If I'm that guy, I'm like, "couldn't you have showed up years ago, Jesus?"
- vii) But see, we are that blind guy...we do have diseases and ailments and problems and things that weigh us down. Can we begin to understand that even though we are blind or sick or burdened or filled with anger or have bodies that are falling apart, God still wants to shine his glorious light through us BECAUSE of it or in SPITE of it?
- viii) Jesus goes on to say, in verse 4, that TIME IS SHORT. We have work to do. This life is short and we have to do everything we can to show the world the glory of God. If we get so distracted by what ails us, our witness is diluted. But if we can give what we have to Jesus, ailments and all, and be looking for how He will use those for His glory, then the focus goes where it belongs...on him and not us.
- ix) And just to prove what he said, Jesus heals the man...

b) Read verses 6-7

- i) This man never asked to be healed. In fact, John doesn't record any words spoken by the blind man before Jesus heals him. Jesus simply spits on the ground, kneads the spit into some mud, and places the mud on the man's eyes. Totally gross, right? Then, he says, go to the pool of Siloam and wash. The same pool from which the sacrificial water is drawn for the Jewish festivals. This is like holy water of sorts. The guy goes and washes and then can see.
- ii) In some ways, not being blind was a problem for this guy, I'm sure. No blindness = no income. Who's going to give money to a sighted beggar with no other problems? Now, he had to find a job...right?

iii) He's got some explaining to do first...verse 8...

c) Read verses 8-12

- i) Sometimes, when incredible things happen, we have a hard time believing it. We want proof...we want to explain it a different way that makes more logical sense.
- ii) Last year, the district youth had a Christian illusionist come...blew our minds. And even though you KNOW there's a trick to it, something we can't see, it blows your mind anyway!
- iii) God is not in the illusion game. He's for real. (Say, God's is for real!) I've witnessed people being healed. My favorite thing is when Jesus invades people lives, and lights them on fire, there lives change. Marriages are restored sometimes. People stop doing the things that they thought they could never do without – drinking, smoking, swearing, lust.
- iv) When GOD makes changes, he makes them for real. No smoke and mirrors. And it's hard to comprehend. And the people around us get angry because we're different people today than we were in high school, or when we got married, or whatever...
- v) "Can't be the same person," they say! "Who are you and what did you do with my sister?" This is exactly what the blind man's neighbors were saying. They could UNDERSTAND or comprehend what happened to him. It must be a joke or some prank or something.
- vi) But the formerly blind man, look at this in verses 9-10, KEPT SAYING (continuously), "I AM the man." Not like, "I'm the man" 😊 but I am the guy who you know!
- vii) And they KEPT ASKING HIM (continuously), how it happened. So he told them again.
- viii) And persistence pays off sometimes when we are transformed and there's no other explanation other than Jesus. And these people finally said, "Alright, where is this guy...this Jesus?" And the man said, (I love this), "I dunno"
- ix) And so, because they couldn't drop it, they wanted someone to, like, put a stamp of approval or something on this, they went to the religious leaders...verse 13...

d) Read verses 13-17

- i) The people brought the formerly blind man to the Pharisees, and all over again, he had to explain what happened.
- ii) And instead of trying to investigate, the Pharisees simply dismissed it as wrong. Notice, though, that it's not the healing that's the problem. There was no law against healing on the Sabbath (who does that, right?), but the problem was the fact that Jesus made mud.
- iii) Kneading (like kneading bread, right?) was strictly and specifically forbidden on the Sabbath. Kneading was its own category of Sabbath-day sins. So, here's Jesus, kneading spit into mud, which was breaking the law.
- iv) The Pharisees were so focused on the law, they were blind to what had just happened. Some guy was healed and all we can see is that Jesus made mud, which is a no-no. And because this miracle was done through the breaking of some silly law about kneading, the whole thing was sinful, Jesus was sinful, and the it was of the devil.
- v) The Pharisees, though, ask the man, "What do you say ABOUT this man (Jesus)?" And he replied, "He is a prophet." See, the man began to understand that something was different about this man, Jesus.
- vi) The Pharisees, though, were still trying to find something else...

e) Read verse 18-23

- i) In come the parents, (dun dun dah). They would know if he was blind. And so the Pharisees grill them too.
- ii) And they said, "We know he's our son, and we know he was blind...how it is that he can see now, we do not know."
- iii) Except, I think they knew. I think they knew Jesus did this, but they were afraid to say it because they were afraid of the consequences.
- iv) Sometimes, blindness is something that we maintain in our lives so that we don't have to face the ramifications of our true faith.
- v) Mom and Dad, here, denied any knowledge of Jesus for fear that associating with him would get them kicked out of the synagogue...kicked out of the family...whatever. Ask him...verse 24...

f) Read verses 24-34

- i) (Give glory to God – tell the TRUTH...REPENT OF YOUR SIN AND SPEAK THE TRUTH.)
- ii) The Pharisees are so filled with pride about who they claim to be in relationship to God through Moses that they missed the point of the One who came to give them that relationship for real.
- iii) The blindman is astonished that they don't see what he sees (pun intended) The blindman becomes the teacher...
- iv) The Pharisees claim to KNOW God, through Moses. Yet, the only way to truly understand what Moses said, and to truly receive the OT promises that God gave to Moses is to believe in Jesus, God's Son. How ironic is this??
- v) They claimed that only God can heal, yet when Jesus healed, they claimed it was out of sin. "If he were not from God," said the formerly blind man, "he could do nothing." Yet, because he did something miraculous, he must be from God.
- vi) When in your life have you tried to justify something incredible by means of something tangible? Have you ever explained away something that God was doing because you didn't fully understand it, because it was going to ask you to rethink what you believe, or because it was calling you to something greater than you were currently willing to pursue?
- vii) The Pharisees drove this man out, they reviled him, because they CHOSE to be blind to what had happened...

g) Read verses 35-38

- i) This man's response to Jesus is trust in him. This formerly blind beggar, transformed by Jesus, so that God's works could be revealed, fell into the arms of the Savior with the simple words..."Lord, I believe." Have you said those words to Him?
- ii) He went from hopeless blind man, to healed, physically. He understood that Jesus was something unique, maybe a prophet, I don't know. And then it hit him, when he was being challenged and prodded by those who would doubt it...he confessed Jesus as Lord and put his faith in Him.

- iii) And then he worshipped him...simple worship. He finally had his eyes opened, first physically, then spiritually...and even theologically. God is at work in me...
- iv) When we take the time to allow God to work in our lives, we are wooed into deeper levels of revelation about God IN US because of Jesus.
- v) He is the center of the universe...the creator of all things...he is Lord and will be judge...look at verse 39

h) Read verses 39-41

- i) If we can trust God at His word, then we can close our eyes and see with His eyes...we can fall into the arms of the Savior.
- ii) If we insist on keeping our eyes open on our own, and thinking that what we see is what we get, and there's no need to trust God because we "got this" then Jesus says, we will ultimately be blind, and miss the blessings...miss the healing...miss the work that God will do through us, shining his light.
- iii) And sadly, according to Jesus here, when judgment comes, and we have to account for a lifetime of actions and beliefs and words, if we didn't close our eyes and allow Jesus to be our light and our sight, then he may say he never knew us...

3) Application

- a) John Wesley said, "...the consequence of Jesus' coming will be, that by the just judgment of God, while the blind in body and soul receive their sight, they who boast they see, will be given up to still greater blindness than before."
- b) And different levels and types and causes of spiritual blindness are around us everyday. Most prominently and sadly in the world around us outside the church...those without an understanding of God's plan through Jesus.
- c) But we also, as followers of Jesus, find ourselves spiritually blind sometimes. We come to church, we serve on committees and ministry teams, maybe even go to a small group or Sunday school, but we fail to see that Jesus is LORD over our lives. We go along 'doing our thing' and are able to separate our Sunday morning thing from the rest of our lives. Jesus is Lord on Sunday, but my eyes are wide open with my own strength on Monday.

- d) Or maybe you're allowing Christ to be a part of everyday, but when it comes to serving him with your God-given gifts, you tend to turn the other way. If you don't make eye-contact with Jesus, maybe the gifts he's asking you to use will just stay quiet.
- e) Jesus makes it pretty clear that time is short...and while there is still day we have to be doing the work of God that he equips us to do, no matter who we are or where we find ourselves...
- f) So what are some of the causes of spiritual blindness and how do we pray against them? See if any of these are your causes of blindness:
 - i) I'm too busy or distracted – maybe it's time to pull over and decompress...time to reconnect with God. I've said before, a burned out body of Christ is of no real value to a world that needs to see and understand that God is in the restoration business.
 - ii) Another cause: I'm not wired that way. Spiritual blindness can be caused by an incomplete understanding of who God made us to be and how He made us to serve Him. Know yourself as God does.
 - iii) How about: I'm not worthy. You're right...but that doesn't mean Christ is not worthy in you.
 - iv) I'm afraid. I don't want to see the truth because I'm afraid.
 - v) My favorite: I'm stubborn – this is way I do things and that's final.
 - vi) Or, I'm not ready. I tell couples who are getting married or who are thinking about having a baby – you'll never be fully ready, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be intentional about preparing now.

4) Conclusion

- a) Jesus didn't primarily come to heal our blindness, but to reveal the power and the glory of God – to shine His light through OUR lives.
- b) If God can do that through you, why wouldn't you want to? When we agree to encounter Jesus, allow him to heal us, fall into his arms with holy trust, God's glory is revealed...God's power is revealed...the world is transformed for His purposes.
- c) As you come forward for communion in a few minutes, ask yourself if you are truly and honestly seeing Jesus and trusting Him. There is never time

when we are completely blind...the Holy Spirit works in us and on us all the time to call us to God...are you seeing it in your life?

- d) If you have trusted Christ for salvation, but are experiencing blindness when it comes to seeing Jesus as Lord of your life, or certain parts that you have yet to give over to Him, bring those to the table this morning and leave them here for good.
- e) If God is pulling and tugging at you to take that next step...to understand your gifts and use them, but right now, you are having a hard time seeing it...then lay it out this morning and ask Jesus to help you see...
- f) Communion is Christ's real and powerful presence in our lives. It's God gift of grace and a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ.
- g) This sacrament is not primarily for us to experience Christ, even though we do. It is for God's work to be revealed for His glory and his honor.
- h) Our blindness, or whatever holds us back from falling into the arms of the Savior, is what Christ came to take away so the God's could receive all the glory.
- i) (kneel) Let's pray...