

# LORD, I BELIEVE

John 9:35-41 (No. 54)

Treasuring Christ Church – Pastor Boyd Johnson

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## INTRODUCTION

### Review

In this chapter, we've been following the story of the man who was born blind and was healed by Jesus. Immediately after he was healed, the man's neighbors were so astounded by the miracle, they didn't know what to make of it. So they took the man to their spiritual leaders—the Pharisees.

The Pharisees began to interrogate the man about how he was healed. As soon as they found out that Jesus had healed him, their investigation of the miracle turned instead to defaming the miracle worker. They hated Jesus, their enemy, and they wouldn't believe the miracle because of the one who performed it.

The Pharisees became so angry at the man for suggesting that perhaps they too wanted to become a disciple of Jesus that, in a fit of rage, they excommunicated the man from the synagogue. They cut him off from the religious system. In that moment, he lost his religion. In our passage, we find out what happened to the man after he lost his religion. What we find is that having lost his religion, he found heaven. Or, more accurately, heaven found him.

### Text

John 9:35–41: “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 worshiped 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.”

You'll recall that Jesus called himself the Light of the world in John 8:12. He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” When Jesus said that, some Pharisees heard him and it irritated them (8:13). The Pharisees didn't follow Jesus. They chafed at the idea that because they weren't following Jesus, they were walking in darkness. They believed themselves to be the holy people of God. They believed that they had spiritual insight above what the common Jews had. They thought that if anyone was walking in the light of life, it had to be them.

So they challenged Jesus' testimony. They accused him of sin. They said he was demon-possessed. They ridiculed him. They would not believe him. And eventually the Jews accused him of blasphemy and they picked up stones to kill him. It wasn't yet time for Jesus to die, so he hid himself. That's how chapter 8 ends.

Chapter 9 begins with Jesus passing by a blind man and healing him. Do you see the connection between the two chapters? They are two episodes of the same story.

The reason Jesus healed the blind man wasn't mainly to give him a new life. The reason Jesus healed the blind man was to illustrate that Jesus is the light of the world and that all who follow him will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. The man's healing was a living parable about sight and blindness in the spiritual realm. The story shows that Jesus is able to give sight to the spiritually blind because he is the Light of the world. The story in chapter 9 proves the statement in chapter 8:12. The only way you can have eyes to see the truth is if your eyes are opened by the light of Jesus.

But not everyone responds to the light of Jesus the same way. When the light of Jesus shines, some are made to see the truth, but others, who think they see, are blinded by the light and turn away.

In our passage, we see two responses to the light of Jesus shining. The one who was blind, who knows he is spiritually blind, sees Jesus for who he is. Those who are spiritually blind, but who think they can see, are blinded to who Jesus really is.

The conclusion of this story is a study of contrasts between the formerly blind man and the Pharisees.

## **I. THE LIGHT SHINES AND SOME SEE**

In 9:34, the Pharisees excommunicate the man from the synagogue ("they cast him out"). As we saw last week, what happened to the man after he was healed was really a sad story. His own parents forsook him and then his religious leaders forsook him.

But his healer hadn't forsaken him. This man was about to experience the promise of Psalm 27:10: "My father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in." As one ancient church father wrote, "The Jews cast him out from the Temple, and the Lord of the Temple found him."

Verse 35: "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'"

Jesus heard what happened to him. No doubt, Jesus could have learned this through divine knowledge, just as he knew Nathanael before they had met (1:48) and knew what was in man (2:24) and knew who would betray him before it happened (6:64). But John records that Jesus heard it. I think that means that word spread quickly of the man's excommunication.

As I said last week, this was the first time in recorded Jewish history that anyone had been cast out of the synagogue. So it quickly became the talk of the town. When he heard it, Jesus found the man. John writes that Jesus found him in the most nonchalant way possible, as if it would be expected that Jesus would find him and that it was really no problem for Jesus to find one man in a city with so many people. Of course, all that is true. Jesus had no problem finding anyone he wanted to find. In 1:43, Jesus found Philip. In chapter 4, Jesus intentionally traveled through Samaria in order to find the woman at the well (4:4). In 5:6, Jesus sought out the lame man at

the Pool of Bethesda to heal him and then found him again to exhort him to no longer living in sin (5:14). Here again, Jesus found the one he sought. The post-festival crowds and the usual busyness of Jerusalem were no obstacles to Jesus finding the man.

Every time that Jesus seeks and finds someone in the Gospel of John, he does so with the purpose of revealing his own character and identity to them. With Philip in chapter 1, Jesus is revealed as the one whom Moses and the prophets wrote (1:45). With the Samaritan woman in chapter 4, Jesus is revealed as the one who is the fountain of living water (4:14) and the Messiah (4:26). With the lame man in chapter 5, Jesus is revealed as the one who heals (5:8), the Lord of the Sabbath, and the one united with the Father in work (5:17).

Here again, with this man, Jesus is revealed to be the Son of Man, who gives spiritual sight (9:39). Jesus sought people out in order to find them so that they would see him as he is. This is divine initiative on display.

Jesus moved first. Jesus sought him out. Jesus cared for this man even after he had given him a new life physically. He wanted to bring this man *all* the way to faith. The only way that would happen was if Jesus found him. That's the story of our salvation. As the hymn, *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, says, "Jesus sought me when a stranger. . ." Jesus found us so that we could see him. In our blindness, we would have groped in darkness forever, never finding the light of life. But Jesus shone in our hearts through the gospel so that we could see him as he is.

Having found the man, Jesus asked him the most important question he had ever faced. The man's answer to this question would set his eternal destiny: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

The word "you" is emphatic. This is a question of personal significance. Would he himself put his faith in the Son of Man? This is the reason why Jesus came to the man. It wasn't a follow-up wellness visit. He didn't come to give the man a job or to commiserate with him about his excommunication (he doesn't even mention it). He came to pose this question and seek this man's response.

It is notable that Jesus asked him if he believed in the *Son of Man*. That title had significance to the Jews. In Daniel 7:13-14, the Son of Man comes in glory to receive the kingdom from the Ancient of Days. It was Jesus' favorite title for himself. He used it over 80 times about himself in the gospels. In John's Gospel, the title occurs in 12 passages—all of which are spoken by Jesus except one, where the crowds ask, "Who is this Son of Man?" (John 12:34).

If we were to look at each of the 12 passages, we would find that as the Son of Man, Jesus is the revelation of God, the one who will judge the world, the one who will die and ascend to the Father, and the one who will give spiritual nourishment to his disciples. So the question is loaded: Does he believe in *this* Son of Man?

The man answered (v. 36), "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" He answered Jesus with a question. He doesn't yet believe in the Son of Man because he doesn't know who the Son of Man is. It isn't a question of information, but a question of identification. As a Jew, he must have some familiarity with the title Son of Man, he just doesn't know who that is. This is the first time the man has beheld the one who healed him. But, if you read the story carefully, it isn't

even certain that the man recognizes that he is talking to Jesus. Remember, the last time he met Jesus, he was blind. He wasn't able to see until he went to the pool and when he came back Jesus was gone. He wouldn't know what Jesus looked like. But the man indicates his willingness to believe in the Son of Man: "Who is he, sir, *that I may believe in him?*"

This is the question the Gospel of John was written to answer. Who is the Son of Man? Who is Jesus? Who is the Son of God that you may believe in him.

John 20:31: "These [stories] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Verse 37: "Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you."

He gave a two-part answer. You've seen the Son of Man and he is the one speaking to you.

Don't miss the fact that Jesus reveals himself through two sensory organs of the man formerly blind. The Son of the Man is the one you see and the one you hear. For this man with newfound sight, everything was visual. His eyes were telling him new stories about the world. Before, he could only hear, smell, taste, and touch. But now he could see and the world would have been in some ways much different than he anticipated. His eyes were giving him so much information.

I believe this is the moment that the man understood that the one who healed him was the one who stood before him. Perhaps he began making the connection based on Jesus' voice. But when Jesus referenced his sight, everything fell into place. Now he saw and knew his healer. Now he understood that the one he only knew before as Jesus and a prophet was also the Son of Man. His physical senses were used by God to reveal something that could only be spiritually discerned (belief in the Son of Man).

Verse 38: "He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him."

Unlike the Pharisees, for this man, seeing was believing. The Pharisees saw the evidence of Jesus' miracles and the testimony of Jesus' divinity, but this man saw and believed.

The word "Lord" is the same word translated "sir" in verse 36. The context determines the meaning. The switch from "sir" to "Lord" is no doubt correct. The man went from a posture of respect to a posture of worship.

"Worship" is the word (*proskueo*) for falling down or kneeling in adoration. It can describe the expression of a person's heart or the expression of a person's body. The instant this man came to realize who was standing before him, his heart bowed in reverence and I believe his knees followed. What started in his heart was expressed in his body. This was a dramatic moment. He certainly didn't understand everything to know about Jesus. He was worshiping better than he knew. Nevertheless, he was worshiping truly. He responded rightly to what light had been revealed to him as his eyes were opened and growing wider.

Remember when Jesus said to his disciples in (v. 3) that this man was born blind "that the works of God might be displayed in him"? Here was now the ultimate reason the man was born blind. God's work was displayed in him when he was physically healed and, greater still, God's work

was displayed in him when he gained spiritual sight to see Jesus as the Son of Man worthy of worship.

Whatever pain this man endured in life because of his blindness, we can confidently say that when he met his Savior on earth and especially when he met his Savior again in heaven, it was worth the pain. The eternal joy far exceeded the momentary hurt. His blindness was relatively a light, momentary affliction. But as Paul tells us, “This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17).

We never hear from him again. He says nothing more in Scripture. He does nothing more. The last words recorded in Scripture from him are, “Lord, I believe.” The last action recorded in Scripture about him is, “He worshiped him.”

That’s quite a memorial of sorts. We don’t know a lot of things about this man. We don’t even know his name. But we do know how he ended up. We know the posture of his heart before Jesus. That’s his legacy.

Would that we all have that kind of legacy. Long after you’re gone is the character of your life such that the dominate memory of you in people’s minds is that you believed in Jesus and worshiped Jesus? Not that Jesus was *part* of your life, but that you were consumed with worshiping Jesus. Will the memory of you be your life *plus* Jesus? Or, will the memory of you be, his life can’t be explained unless you understand he worshiped Jesus?

## II. THE LIGHT SHINES AND SOME ARE BLINDED

Evidently, Jesus found this man out in a public place.

We’ll see in verse 40 that some Pharisees overheard all these things. Knowing that they were listening in, Jesus said in verse 39: “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” He came into the world for judgment. That wasn’t the central purpose of his coming, but it was a necessary consequence.

His central purpose in coming was to lay down his life so that those who trust in him could be saved. In John 3:17 we read that Jesus came into the world, “in order that the world might be saved through him.” In John 12:47, Jesus says: “I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.” He didn’t come to unleash God’s judgment on the world, yet. But one of the consequences of his coming is that the world would be judged. His coming divides humanity.

Man’s relationship with Jesus is decisive in the question of their destiny. Those who reject Christ are judged in eternal damnation. Those who trust in him are received into eternal life. So in that sense, he came as judgment—to split the sheep and the goats, the children of God and the children of Satan, believers and unbelievers. In Luke 2:34 Simeon said of the infant Jesus: “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed.” In Luke 12:51, Jesus said, “Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” In Matthew 10:35, Jesus explained that his coming would divide households: “I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” “Those who do not see” are those who know they are in spiritual darkness. They know they need a Savior. They understand their condition and

recognize their blindness. To those, Jesus came to give true sight. The man is an illustration of one who was blind but came to see.

“Those who see” are those who think they are in the light but are not. They claim to have spiritual sight, even though they are yet blind. Those, Jesus will blind. They will sink deeper into their darkness. The Pharisees were an illustration of those who thought they could see, but were blinded by the light of Jesus. When the light of Jesus shines, some are made to see the truth, but others, who think they see, are blinded by the light and turn away.

Once again, the Pharisees were offended at Jesus’ teaching (v. 40): “Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, ‘Are we also blind?’” The Pharisees perceived rightly that Jesus was indicting them. Blindness here means lacking spiritual insight. Their question anticipates a negative answer: “We are not also blind, are we?” That is, surely, you aren’t suggesting we have no spiritual insight! Of all people, they couldn’t imagine that they would be blind. But they were.

Jesus responded (v. 41): “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.” Jesus uses their own words to condemn them. He says, if you were blind—that is, if you have no spiritual insight—you would have no guilt. That doesn’t mean that they would be sinless. But if they hadn’t had the benefit of the prophets’ teachings, the Law of God, and Jesus’ revelation of himself to them—if they didn’t have this light, then they wouldn’t be guilty of rejecting that light. But they claimed to have spiritual insight. They claimed to see.

Since they did have the benefit of the light, but in their self-righteousness rejected the light, then their guilt remained. If anyone should have recognized Jesus as the Son of Man, it should have been them. They should have acted on the best knowledge that they had. Had they done so, they would have welcomed the coming of Jesus. But they couldn’t claim ignorance. They themselves denied they were ignorant and claimed great spiritual insight. They claimed to have perfect vision (“we see”). Because of this, their guilt remained.

The word “remains” is the same word we saw in chapter 8 for “abides.” In chapter 8, Jesus said, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They proved by their continued blindness that they didn’t remain in Jesus, but instead remained in their guilt.

The chapter began with the question of who is guilty. Was the man born blind because of his own sin or was he born blind because of his parents’ sin? Jesus said neither he nor his parents were guilty of sin leading to the man’s blindness. Guilt didn’t cause his physical blindness.

The chapter ends with another question of guilt. The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Are we blind?” That is, are you suggesting that we are guilty of spiritual blindness? Jesus said they were willfully spiritually blind and therefore they were guilty.

## **CONCLUSION**

So in this story, we learn this lesson: the same Light that cause some to see, blinds others. When the light of Jesus shines, some are made to see the truth, but others, who think they see, are blinded by the light and turn away. Which one are you? What is your response to the Light of

the world? Does the light cause you to see or does it cause you to turn away in blindness?

There's a hymn that probably all of you know and it shows us how we should respond to the light of Jesus:

The first verse goes,

“O soul, are you weary and troubled? /  
No light in the darkness you see? /  
There's light for a look at the Savior /  
And life more abundant and free.”

And then the chorus comes:

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus /  
Look full in His wonderful face /  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim /  
In the light of His glory and grace.”