

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Sermon: Blindness & Sight

Scripture: John 9:1-41

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February 15, 2026

Opener: Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Choruses: "Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord" & Here I Am to Worship"

After Sermon: This I Believe (The Creed)

Closer: Be Thou my Vision

Today's Bible lesson is rich and layered —
almost like a drama unfolding scene by scene.
This morning we're going to walk through it slowly together,
and let each part speak before we step back to view the whole.

Before we begin, I'd like to offer a pray for illumination.
As one of my resources reminds us
"The power of God's Word comes not
from the ink and paper of our printed Bibles
or from the creative rhetoric of a preacher
but from the work of the Holy Spirit...
The prayer for illumination
explicitly acknowledges the Spirit's work
in this part of worship
by requesting God's Spirit to act
through the reading and preaching of Scripture." (Worship Sourcebook, 139)

Let us pray:
*Living God,
help us to hear your holy Word with open hearts
so that we may truly understand;
and, understanding, that we may believe;
and, believing, that we may follow
in all faithfulness and obedience,
seeking your honor and glory in all that we do.
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind John 9:1-12

It may seem odd that Jesus' disciples
would make a moral judgment about a man's disability.
When we see someone in a wheelchair,

Our first thought isn't whether someone has sinned.
We do understand that actions have consequences.
Drunk driving can devastate lives.
Certain habits can damage our bodies.
But many times, suffering has no simple explanation.
And it can be pastorally harmful to suggest that it does.

Jesus' responds to his disciples' questions
With a warning against trying to make direct connections
Between illness and moral failings.

I like the way that Peterson describes the encounter:
"You're asking the wrong question.
You're looking for someone to blame.
There is no such cause-effect here.
Look instead for what God can do." (John 9:3 MSG)

Then without waiting for an invitation
Jesus spits on the ground,
Mixes the dirt with his saliva
puts the mud on the man's eyes,
and tells him to wash it off in the pool of Siloam.
[this is not the same pool where people gather to be healed]
The man went as commanded.
And when he washed, he could see.

This is a bigger miracle than most of us imagine.
There is more to sight than our eyeballs.

One commentator note that
"[Not] only had Jesus fixed his optic hardware
but he must also have installed the necessary mental software
which allowed the man to make sense of the information
[now]coming through his eyes...
Functioning as a sighted person
requires having access to a long backlog of visual experience."
(Scott Hoezee "John 9:1-41" *The Lectionary Commentary: the Gospels* 521)

The man born blind follows the directions
of Jesus and ends up seeing.

It is an astonishing miracle.

Let's here the second part of the story:

"The Pharisees Investigate the Healing, John 9:13-34"

What we've have just encountered
Is something like a courtroom inquiry
Divided into different scenes.

Normally the healing of a person
Would be reason for celebration.
The problem, however, is that this healing occurred on the Sabbath.
And keeping the Sabbath was for the people of Jesus' time
A very big deal.
Later writing in the Babylonian Talmud noted
"If Israel would keep two Sabbaths according to the law,
they would immediately be redeemed."
A much later Jewish philosopher and essayist, Asher Ginseberg,
Famously noted: "More than Israel has kept the Sabbath,
the Sabbath has kept Israel."

We are all familiar with the 4th commandment
To not honor, to keep the Sabbath:
"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.
On it you shall not do any work..." (Exodus 20:8-10)

The problem with this commandment
was that it left the labor, the work undefined.
In their discussion of this law the Jewish people
Eventually came up with 39 different categories of activities
That they considered 'work'.

But Jesus, a teacher, ignores these conventions.
He healed a paralytic on the Sabbath
And then advised the man to take up his bed and walk (John 5:8).

In today's reading he does the same.
How is that, you might be wondering?

"Healing itself was forbidden,
except for cases where life itself was in danger...
amongst the prohibited categories of work was kneading,
and making mud from spittle and dirt
might well have struck the leaders
as [also] falling under that prohibition.
And finally, there was a division of opinion...
as to whether or not anointing the eyes
was legal on the Sabbath. (D.A. Carson 367)

In the eyes of the Pharisees, Jesus was a Sabbath-breaker.
And if he was a Sabbath-breaker, he was a sinner.
And if he was a sinner, he could not be from God.
And yet... something undeniable had happened.
Not just the healing of blindness,
but the restoration of sight of a person born blind.
This was something virtually unheard of. (CBSB 1832)

This creates a paradox for the Pharisees.
Jesus performed a miracle.
Yet sinners cannot do the works of God.

To resolve this contradiction
The Pharisees first attempt to disprove the miracle.
They investigate the testimony of the man born blind
And when he affirms what has happened (and calls Jesus a prophet)
they call in his parents.

When his parents confirm their sons former blindness,
They reexamine the man who had been born blind.
But when he has nothing to add
Other than questioning their ability to listen,
They realize that have failed to disprove the miracle
and resort to insulting him and throwing him out.

Let's hear the third part of the story:

"Spiritual Blindness, John 9:35-41".

What is interesting about the man born blind
Is that he had never actually seen Jesus.

He was blind when Jesus sent him away.

When he's first asked who how he was healed,
He talked about 'the man called Jesus'
putting mud in his eyes.

When he is examined by the Pharisees
It is clear to him that Jesus is something of a prophet,
Someone who is close to God.

The encounter with Jesus has given him sight,
But now after the dispute with the Pharisees
He has been effectively thrown out of community.

But Jesus, the Good Shepherd,
doesn't leave him on his own.
Jesus finds the man, who has never seen him,
Asking him "whether he believes in the Son of Man".

Biblical Scholar Tom Wright notes that
"One of the greatest messianic pictures of the time,
drawn from the book of Daniel, is that of the 'son of man',
who is exalted to a seat alongside God
and given the task of bringing Gods judgment to the world."

Tom continues:

"[When] Jesus finds the man who had been healed—
and who has now been thrown out of the synagogue—
and asks him whether he believes in the son of man,
this is what he means.

**Is he prepared to put his trust in the one
who has come to bring God's judgement,
God's dangerous healing light, into the world?** (Wright 145)

The man answers "Who is he, sir?
Tell me so that I may believe in him."
Jesus responds, "You have now seen him;
in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

Then the man replies, "Lord, I believe,"
And the Gospel writer notes that the healed man
worships Jesus. (John 9:35-38)

The man born blind is first given sight by Jesus.
Then he is given insight to see that Jesus
is the Messiah, God's only son.

So what do we make of this story as a whole?
I think there are at least three ways
This passage speaks to our faith
Offering invitations and warnings.

The story first offers an invitation to patience.
Coming to faith in Jesus is sometimes a gradual process.

In his first encounter with Jesus
The man born blind seems to know very little about him
Other than Jesus did something wonderful for him.

As the man is forced to reflect on his story
under the examination of the Pharisees
He becomes increasingly certain
that God is somehow present in Jesus.
Finally when Jesus appears before him,
And invites the man to trust in him,
The man grabs hold of Jesus in Jesus' fullness.

Faith is sometimes a gradual unfolding.
As those who are waiting for others
This is an invitation to patience.
That is our first lesson.

The second lesson is a warning
a warning about certainty.

Sometimes the most knowledgeable and most devout
can be the most mistaken.
The Pharisees of today's story are the respected,
educated lay people in Israel.

The Pharisees are the ones that other looked to
When it came to questions about the life of faith
or knowledge of God.

But “The Pharisees... do not remember the ancient promises
that one of the signs of the dawning of the messianic age
is the restoration of sight to the blind (Isaiah 29:18) (D.A. Carson 375)

Despite their learning and status
They are shown to be unable to hear or see
When God’s Messiah appears.

Why?
They are so committed
to their interpretation of the law,
A mistaken interpretation of the law,
That they are unable to recognise
When its Author appears.

We all have our own blind spots.
Sometimes our modern day leaders
Can be too committed to mistaken interpretations
Which means they also end up
missing out on the movement of God.

This passage calls all of us — especially leaders — to humility.
Knowledge does not guarantee sight.
We must remain open, teachable,
and ready to see what God is doing.

Don’t outsource your faith entirely to leaders,
no matter how confident they sound.
Grow. Ask questions. Open the Scriptures.
Stay tender enough to recognize when God is doing something new.
Sometimes the most knowledgeable and devout miss the mark.
That’s our second lesson, a warning.

Our third lesson is another invitation,
an invitation to recenter,
and let Jesus become the lens through which we read Scripture.

As many of you are aware the Bible is not a book
But a library of books written in different culture contexts
In different languages and times and places.

People have created systems of understanding
to provide unity among these books
or to resolve the tensions within them and between them.

It is easy to get lost in the books
It is easy to get lost in the systems that try to contain them.
The Pharisees knew their Bibles.
But they missed the Author
When he was standing right in front of them.

Maybe a better way of looking at this diverse library
Is to read everything through the lens of the person of Jesus.
What left the Pharisees blind is that Jesus’ view of the Sabbath
Didn’t jive with their own interpretations.
They believed Jesus had to fit inside their understanding of the law.

But they had it backwards.
What they failed to understand was that
“Jesus is the ultimate divine self-disclosure
by whom and through whom
the deepest significance of the law can be discerned.” (D.A. Carson 376)
That’s our third lesson.

PAUSE

Patience in our faith.
Humility in our certainty.
And Christ at the center of how we read and live.

May we all see Jesus
And excel in spiritual insight.
Thanks be to God, Amen.