

# A Lowly Beggar

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 12 July 2020

Preacher: Alistair Chalmers

[ 0 : 00 ] John chapter 9 verses 1 to 12. As he went along he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me.

Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes. Go, he told him, washing the pool of Siloam, this word means sent. So the man went and washed and came home seeing. His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?

Some claimed that he was. Others said, No, he only looks like him. But he himself insisted, I am the man. How then were your eyes opened, they asked.

[ 1 : 11 ] He replied, The man they called Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and then I could see.

Where is this man, they asked him. I don't know, he said. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

Therefore, the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He put mud on my eyes, the man replied. And I washed and now I see. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.

But others asked, How can a sinner perform such signs? So they were divided. Then they turned again to the blind man. What had you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.

The man replied, He is a prophet. They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received the sight until they sent for the man's parents. Is this your son? They asked.

[ 2 : 13 ] Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that he can now see? We know he is our son, the parents answered. And we know he was born blind. But how he can see or who opened his eyes, we don't know.

Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

That was why his parents said, He is of age. Ask him. The second time they summoned the man who had been blind. Give glory to God by telling the truth, they said. We know this man is a sinner. He replied, Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know, I was blind but now I see. Then they asked him, What did he do to you?

How did he open your eyes? He answered, I've told you already and you do not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?

[ 3 : 19 ] Then they hurled insults at him and said, You are this fellow's disciple. We are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses.

But as for this fellow, we don't even know where he is coming from. The man answered, Now that is remarkable. You don't know where he comes from.

Yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. To this they replied, You were steeped in sin at birth. How dare you lecture us.

And they threw him out. Jesus heard that they had thrown him out. And when he found him, he said, Do you believe in the Son of Man? Who is he, sir? The man asked.

[ 4 : 23 ] Tell me so that I may believe in him. Jesus said, You have now seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you. Then the man said, Lord, I believe.

And he worshipped him. Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see, and those who see will become blind. Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, What, are we blind too?

Jesus said, If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin. But now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. Shall we just pray?

Lord, we come before you now. We thank you for the means to meet together in an online way. And despite the fact that we are distanced physically, we can still gather together around your word, which unites us.

[ 5 : 31 ] We thank you for the people who make it possible for these sermons to go ahead and for the skills that you give them. And we thank you for these words, that your son came so that the blind might see.

Lord, would you open our eyes to what you are saying to us today? We ask that Alistair's sermon will speak to us all, that your words through him will teach us, encourage us, and point us to Christ in whom salvation is found.

We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Good morning, everyone. My name is Alistair, and I have the privilege of being the assistant pastor here at Bruntsfield.

And it is my joy this morning to open up John chapter 9 to us. But let me just start with a little bit of an observation. I'm sure some of us have really enjoyed the good weather that we've been having during this time of lockdown, particularly in the months of April and May.

The sun has been shining, the shorts and the t-shirt have been on, and maybe you even enjoyed a walk in the park, or you enjoyed soaking up the sun in the garden.

[ 6 : 49 ] But my wife Sabina and I have found something quite interesting about the sun during this lockdown period. So during our normal Scottish weather of overcast clouds and grey-tinted skies, we can look out our windows and see clearly the wind blowing the trees to and fro.

We can look down and see our neighbours running to get out of the rain. But during the sunny days of lockdown, we've realised that our windows aren't actually as clean as we thought they were.

The sun has revealed that our windows are full of dirt and dust. Now without the light revealing this dirt, we would be none the wiser.

But when the light shines on the windows, it reveals the extent of dirt that's there. The sun reveals things. But at the same time, the sun can be blinding.

For example, you can be driving down the motorway, going 70 miles per hour, and suddenly that one cloud moves out the way, shooting that sunbeam directly at your eyes.

[ 8 : 03 ] And it takes you a second to pull down the sun flap or put on your sunglasses. The sun can both reveal and it can blind.

Now we all know this. It's not any rocket science. But it's very relevant for the passage that we're looking at this morning in John chapter 9.

Because in this passage, Jesus is reiterating the truth about himself that he mentioned in John 8 verse 12. Where Jesus said this, And Jesus says the same thing in our passage for this morning in verse 5.

I am the light of the world. This seems like a small detail in quite a long passage. So why am I drawing attention to it now?

Well, because the identity of Jesus as the light of the world is fundamental to our understanding of this passage. This chapter tells us when the light shines, some people are made to see, whilst others are blinded.

[ 9 : 23 ] The light is the same, but the reactions to it, the effects of that light are very different. Just as the sun can both reveal and blind, so too does Jesus, the light of the world, when shone into the darkness, reveal the truth to some and blind others.

Jesus says that himself in John chapter 9 verse 39. For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see, and those who see will become blind.

So we're going to see in this passage how the blind receive sight, and how the seeing are made blind. We're going to be jumping in and out of the passage this morning, so it would be great if you have your Bible open in front of you to follow along.

So the first thing we see in this passage is the blind receive sight. The blind receive sight. In verse 1, we see that Jesus is walking along, and he sees a man who's been blind from birth. And Jesus' disciples ask in verse 2, Rabbi, who sinned? This man? Or his parents that he was born blind? The disciples assume, like many people did at that time, that sin and suffering are connected.

[10:50] And that is a right assumption to make to an extent. The Bible says that our bodies, our world, and everything in it has been stained, and broken by sin.

So in general terms, sin and suffering are connected. But when we move from the general principle of suffering and sin, and apply that same truth to individuals, and to very specific and bad situations, and say that they result from a specific sin, we're going beyond what the Bible teaches.

In many cases, we don't know why we suffer. And God's intention is hidden from us. But we cannot, and we should not, conclude that every suffering is a result of a specific sin.

That is a dangerous road to take. And it can hurt many people. And it is simply not what the Bible says. In most cases, suffering is not the result of a specific sin.

Sometimes we might not even know the reason for our sufferings. There is no point on us speculating. That's true in the case of this blind man.

[12:17] His blindness was not a result of sin. But Jesus tells us the purpose behind this man's blindness in verse 3. Jesus says, Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

The purpose of this man's blindness was so that the works of God may be seen and revealed.

That's what Jesus has come to do.

To reveal the works of God. That is what he says in verses 4 and 5. Jesus has come into the world, and whilst he is still with them, with his disciples, this light must be shown to the entire world.

Jesus sees this man who is physically blind, and through an amazing miracle in verse 6, he puts mud and spit on his eyes, sends him to a pool to wash, and he is healed.

What a wonderful miracle. This blind man can suddenly see for the first time in his life. His whole life has been completely changed.

[13:31] He was a beggar. He had no possibility to work. Bound to a life on the street, asking for money, depending on other people. No hope of getting better until Jesus comes and turns his life upside down.

Imagine for a second that walk home. Imagine his joy, being able to see for the very first time. He can look up and see the sun, which up until now has only warmed his face.

He can see the birds flying, the trees swaying in the breeze. He can see his parents' face for the first time. Suddenly, the world takes on a whole new light because his eyes have been opened and he can see.

He would have been skipping home with joy. So that's the physical side of it. But there is also a spiritual revealing of sight that happens to this man.

As we journey through the passage, he understands more and more of who Jesus is. And then we see another miracle. Not only has this man received his sight, but at the very end of the passage, in verse 38, we see that he receives spiritual sight.

[14:56] The identity of Jesus is revealed to him and he worships. Well, this isn't a light bulb, isolated moment where he suddenly sees Jesus and falls on his face in adoration.

He comes to the conclusion of who Jesus is by miraculously receiving his sight and by coming up against severe opposition.

So in verse 7, the man washes at the well and is healed. He goes home and his neighbors are confused because they've only ever known him as the blind man.

And so they ask in verse 10, how then were your eyes opened? He responds, the man they called Jesus made me, made some mud and put it on my eyes.

He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and then I could see. Currently, he sees Jesus as a man.

[16:04] But as we travel through this chapter, this blind man is met with opposition from religious leaders and he's growing in his understanding of who Jesus is. In verse 11, he calls Jesus a man.

In verse 17, he says that Jesus is a prophet, a spokesperson sent from God to deliver his message and to do his works.

And then, in verse 33, he says that Jesus is from God. This man's eyes are being opened wider. He's beginning to see more clearly.

And it comes to a conclusion in verses 35 to 38. In verse 35, Jesus goes out searching for this man. Now, do you see the amazing grace, the abounding love and compassion that Jesus has for this man?

This man has just been kicked out from the Jewish community, excommunicated from the religious establishment that he's known his whole life. And Jesus seeks him out in his pain, in his confusion and finds him.

[ 17 : 20 ] Jesus has compassion for the whole person. He brought physical healing. But Jesus is also interested in this man's spiritual state before God.

For this man to truly receive his sight, he must believe in Jesus and follow him. Jesus, full of compassion, searches for and finds this man.

And asks him in verse 35, do you believe in the son of man? A name that speaks of Jesus' identity as God and his identity as the one who will judge the world.

The blind man, having never seen Jesus up until this point, asks, well, who is this son of man? And Jesus says in verse 38, you have now seen him.

In fact, he is the one speaking with you. This man has received his physical sight, but now he understands who Jesus is.

[ 18 : 30 ] He grasps what exactly has happened to him and who it is that stands before him. And he receives spiritual sight. upon realizing who Jesus is, this man cannot help but have the right response to Jesus.

He responds in adoration, confesses Jesus as Lord and worships him. If you're a Christian this morning, this should be our response every single time we ponder the person of Jesus Christ, who displays the wonderful works of God to the world.

We should worship him in adoration. Maybe you're familiar with this passage. Maybe you've read it a hundred times. Maybe you've become numb to the wondrous works of God that Jesus displays.

Well, I'd encourage you to look at this passage and to look at Jesus afresh and marvel at his wonderful works. Rejoice in the fact that you too have received spiritual sight.

That the wonderful works of God have been revealed to you. We see who Jesus truly is. Rejoice that we've been brought out of the darkness and into the light.

[ 19 : 59 ] We worship a Savior who is compassionate and who pursues people and who calls us to be lights in the world.

Therefore, we too should pursue people with compassion. Help practically where we can in situations, but we should always be willing and ready to share the good news of Jesus so that they too can receive spiritual sight.

That they can recognize Jesus and respond to him in worship. Friends, that is the right response to Jesus.

The journey that this blind man has been on is the same journey that many of us have been on through already in life. we heard about Jesus maybe from an early age, maybe as an adult, and we read stories of what he did and what he taught, and maybe we thought that he was a good guy, a good moral teacher.

But as his light is revealed, as we see his miracles, we hear more about his teaching, we must conclude that he is sent from God.

[ 21 : 22 ] Some confess Jesus as a prophet, but if we stop there, we have completely missed the mark. Because once we hear about how Jesus died on the cross to make forgiveness of sins possible, and how he rose triumphant from the grave, and that he is now seated at the right hand of God the Father, we cannot come to any other conclusion than Jesus is Lord, and we must humble ourselves and worship him.

Have your eyes been opened this morning, or are you still blind to the identity of Jesus? If you're not a Christian this morning, I would urge you to investigate this.

look into this eyewitness account of the life of Jesus and wrestle with what is really happening here. Jesus is not just a good guy.

He is not a moral teacher. Jesus is the light of the world, who can open the eyes of the blind both physically and spiritually. the blind receive sight.

Have you received that sight this morning? Jesus is the light of the world, who opens the eyes of the blind. And the second thing we see in this passage is that those who are seeing are blinded. [ 23 : 02 ] The seeing are blinded. the man is taken to the Pharisees in verse 13 and it is here that we realize the extent of spiritual blindness that is found among the religious elite of this day.

To be spiritually blind means to be oblivious to the things of God. It means that someone can be presented with the works of God, can be told about the identity of Jesus and can have the good news explained to them and yet they continue to reject God.

That is the spiritual blindness of the religious leaders here. The Pharisees hear in verse 15 how this man was blind but now he sees because Jesus put mud on his eyes.

But instead of rejoicing at the wonderful work that God has done, they conclude in verse 16 that Jesus is not from God because this miracle happened on a Sabbath.

They even dare to call Jesus a sinner. He is the only perfect one, the sinless son of God but they refuse to admit that.

[ 24 : 23 ] They are blind. The Pharisees in this next little section question the man and his parents and they conclude that this blind man is a liar contrary to all the evidence and they conclude that Jesus is a sinner.

They are given all the evidence they need to see that this miracle is authentic. They have the neighbor's testimony, the testimony of the blind man that he was born blind and now he sees and they hear from this man's parents and still they refuse to acknowledge what is before their very eyes.

Why? Because although they see they are spiritually blind. Adam and in their denial of the facts the religious leaders turn back to the man in verse 24 and say give glory to God by telling the truth. we know this man is a sinner. The irony of that verse is beyond measure. They are urging this man to glorify God by calling God's son a sinner.

They are not telling the man to give glory to God by thanking God for this healing. They are saying tell the truth before God. But they don't want the truth.

[ 25 : 56 ] They want to hear what they have already concluded in their minds. And just as a side note, if you're not a Christian and you're tuning into this, have you reflected on why it is you believe what you do?

If you don't believe the gospel, do you know exactly what it is that you're rejecting? Can you say with a good conscience that you have earnestly looked at all the evidence?

And you don't believe it? Or are you rejecting something that you haven't properly wrestled with yet? And this blind man who now sees, realizes that these supposed men of God aren't willing to recognize the truth that is very clearly before them.

And he ends this meeting with a conclusion in verse 33. If this man referring to Jesus were not from God, he could do nothing.

And this sends the Pharisees into a rage. And they throw him out of the community. The light of the world has been presented to them.

[ 27 : 12 ] And they are being blinded. As Jesus says, this is why he came in verse 39. For judgment I have come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

And some Pharisees hear this. And they ask a very important and very telling question in verse 40. are we blind too? Jesus responds, if you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin.

But now that you claim to see, your guilt remains. Jesus is saying that they've had God's law. They should be aware of their sin and their need for forgiveness.

But they reject the light because they don't think they need it. They think that their religious deeds will make them right with God.

They think that they are good enough. They are the very definition of self-righteousness. They think that their windows are squeaky clean when the sun shines in on them.

[ 28 : 29 ] But it isn't. The scriptures make it abundantly clear that man cannot be made right with God apart from Jesus Christ.

The gospel, the good news of Jesus, the light of the world is shining on these men and they're being blinded. The sun is shining right at them and they just don't get it.

They refuse the light of the world and they want to stay in their spiritual darkness. Friends, this is what happens when the good news of Jesus is held out to a watching world.

Some turn in belief and rightly worship God, recognizing their sin and utter dependence on Jesus for forgiveness whilst others are blinded, mistakenly thinking that they are good enough to be in God's good books and they refuse to acknowledge the truth that Jesus is Lord.

Let me be clear this morning. We can never do enough or be good enough to be made right with God by ourselves.

[ 29 : 50 ] It is solely through Jesus Christ that people find forgiveness and are made right with God. God. This is important for Christians to know because our job is to spread the good news of Jesus in the world and leave the responses to God.

He knows who his people are. He knows who will respond to him and who will reject him. And as Christians, our response always should be to have the same reaction now as we did when we first became Christians.

to bow down in adoration and out and out worship of Jesus for who he is, the light of the world. Christians are called to be lights in this dark world and share the forgiveness that Jesus offers to those who walk in darkness.

And if you're not a Christian this morning, the Bible says that you're spiritually blind, the message of Jesus, the light of the world reveals that reality in your life.

The light reveals the problem, but the light is the solution to that very problem. Because it was Jesus himself who went to the cross, bearing the full wrath and judgment of God so that sinners, so that spiritually blind people like you and me can receive sight.

[ 31 : 32 ] And Jesus rose from the dead proving that to be true. It is only by confessing our sin to Jesus and crying out to him for forgiveness that we receive spiritual sight.

how will you respond to this light of the world? Will you recognize Jesus as Lord and worship him? Or will you refuse and continue to walk in darkness? Think back to the sun and the power that it has to both reveal and to blind.

Well, my prayer is this morning. as the good news of Jesus has been read, has been proclaimed, as the identity of Jesus, as the light of the world, has been made known, that you would have your eyes opened and that you would run to him for forgiveness and worship him.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you that you sent your son, the light of the world that reveals the reality of our lives.

[ 32 : 49 ] Father, forgive us for the times that we've thought that we can be made right with you by ourselves, that we are good enough. Lord, we confess that we are not.

But we thank you that you have revealed the truth and that you sent your son to die on a cross, meaning that we can now be made right with you, that we can be forgiven and receive spiritual sight.

Father, give us boldness to proclaim the gospel and trust you with the results. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.