

“...SO THAT THE BLIND WILL SEE”

John 9:13-41

Key Verse: 9:39

“Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.’”

In today’s passage the author tells us the responses to Jesus healing a man born blind. The moment Jesus’ disciples saw a man born blind, they became philosophers who could do nothing. However, as soon as Jesus saw him, he wanted to display the works of God in him. Out of his great shepherd’s heart, Jesus opened the man’s eyes, using mud and saliva. This was an amazing sign which reveals that Jesus is the Messiah. This sign leaves no doubt about Jesus’ Messiahship. People should have celebrated what Jesus had done. However, some became irrational and negative. They even persecuted the man whose eyes were opened. How could they do this? Their spiritual eyes were blinded to the Messiah. Why? We need to think about this. In contrast, we can find that the man whose eyes were opened came to see Jesus as the Messiah; his spiritual eyes were opened. Seeing Jesus as the Messiah is not a small matter; it is the most important matter to everyone. Jesus came into this world to open our eyes to see him. Let’s learn how we can see Jesus as the Messiah and what this means.

First, “one thing I do know” (13-34). When Jesus opened the blind man’s eyes, his life totally changed. **He became vibrant, bright and full of hope.** He was probably going around his neighborhood looking at this and that and saying, “Wow, the world is so beautiful!” When people saw him, they began to wonder if he was the same man who used to sit and beg (8). Some claimed that he was, yet others said, “No, he only looks like him.” But he himself said, “I am the man” (9). They asked how his eyes were opened (10). He replied, “The man they call 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” (11). He testified to what Jesus had done for him based on the facts. They should have had a neighborhood block party to celebrate. But since Jesus was involved, they sensed that they should report this to the Pharisees.

So they brought the man to them (12-13). Otherwise, they would be considered uncooperative (22). **In truth, fear blinded them from seeing Jesus as the Messiah.**

Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath (14). The Sabbath was very special to the Jewish people. Keeping the Sabbath was one of the Ten Commandments, a central element of their covenant relationship with God. It was a sign of being God's chosen people. To keep the Sabbath, they refrained from doing any kind of work on the seventh day as a matter of life and death. **So they made many specific rules.** Their endeavor was remarkable. But as they reduced the Sabbath to a set of rules, they lost sight of the real meaning, which was to have fellowship with God and find rest. They became blinded by legalism. When they heard that a man's eyes had been opened, all they could think about was "How?" They asked "how" repeatedly (15,18,21,26). They were not concerned about the great sign that Jesus had done or about the fact that a man born blind could see. They only wanted to find evidence that Jesus had worked on the Sabbath. They concluded that he was not from God because he did not keep the Sabbath (15-16a). Because of this legalistic attitude, they ignored the amazing fact. Still, among them, some accepted the fact of the man's healing and concluded that Jesus could not be a sinner. So they were divided (16b).

They did not know how to handle their division. **So they turned to the man whose eyes were opened and asked his opinion.** He replied simply, "He is a prophet" (17). This means that he came from God. The Pharisees should have acknowledged that Jesus came from God based on the facts. Rather, they deliberately ignored the fact and tried to discredit the man's testimony. They summoned the man's parents and asked, "Is this your son? Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" (18-19) The parents testified, **"We know he is our son. We know he was born blind" (20).** But "we don't know" how he can see. They avoided taking a stand and put responsibility to respond on their son (21). John explained that they did this because they were afraid. The Jewish leaders had already decided to put out of the synagogue anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah (22-23). It was not a small threat. They would be treated as social outcasts and suffer severe hardship. **In fear, they failed to support**

their son's testimony about Jesus. They could keep their place in society, but they missed the chance to stand on the side of Jesus and to support their son's faith. God only knows what consequences they faced.

Christian parents can learn a lesson here. **When our children are beginning to grow in faith, we should encourage them to testify about Jesus publicly.** We should value their faith as we also help them to succeed as citizens in our society. We thank God for the baptism of three CBF graduates yesterday: **Dillon Bautista, Joshua Jung Jr., and Daniel Min.** They shared honest testimonies, repenting their sins sincerely and confessing Jesus as their Lord. Their parents and mentors prayed for them to grow in faith and to serve God. **We should be serious about training our children to testify about Jesus.** It is costly to do so, even in North America today. One professor shared with me that when he openly identified as a Christian, he was suddenly dismissed. But we must realize that publicly acknowledging Jesus is a serious matter. Jesus said, "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven" (Mt 10:32-33). **Romans 10:9 says, "If you declare with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved." //Believing in our hearts is not enough, we must confess our faith in Jesus publicly. Let's confess "Jesus is Lord" no matter how costly it might be.**

A second time the Pharisees summoned the man whose eyes were opened. This time they did not even pretend to find the facts. Instead, they pressured the man to confess that Jesus was a sinner. They must have thought that he would succumb to their pressure. They had political, social and religious power, while the man was jobless, positionless, and powerless. Truth no longer mattered to them. All that mattered was that they had power and they were going to use it to suppress the truth. They were blinded by power. **According to Chuck Colson, this is what happened to the people under President Nixon** which led to the Watergate scandal. They were blinded by power and used it to destroy their enemies. Anyone in a position of power should take warning. How the powerful treat the

marginalized is very important. Jesus, who is the Creator God, never used his power to crush marginalized people, but to save them.

How did the man respond? He did not give in to their pressure. Rather, **he testified even more clearly.** Let's read verse 25: "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!'" What did this man know? Not much compared to the Pharisees. In terms of knowledge, they were outstanding. They studied the Scriptures diligently and memorized the five books of Moses. They knew the Talmud, including the Mishnah--the interpretive comments on the Law by famous rabbis down through the generations. They were great scholars. As Paul says, they saw themselves as **"...a guide to the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth..." (Ro 2:19-20).** The problem is that they did not keep the Law. They did not teach themselves but only taught others. There is a saying, **"Knowledge puffs up while love builds up" (1Co 8:2).** Their great knowledge only made them proud. They were blinded by their knowledge.

On the other hand, the man had no formal education and was not even been able to read. Often, when confronted by the highly educated, such people feel inferior and cannot find their voice. But this man was not intimidated at all, nor was he pretentious. Rather, he freely admitted what he did not know. At the same time, he testified clearly based on what he knew. One thing he knew was that he was blind and now he could see. When he was blind, he could not see where he was going or what he was doing. He became very fatalistic and dark and burdened others. His life was miserable. But when his eyes were opened, his life was totally changed. All his darkness was gone. He was full of hope; his life had new meaning and possibility. **This was the fact of what Jesus had done for him. This knowledge was not from books and study but from his personal encounter with Jesus.** This knowledge was unshakable. This kind of knowledge is powerful and life-changing. It was the truth which he could not deny in any circumstance. This kind of knowledge makes people courageous and bold to testify to the truth. Recently, I was impressed by Joann Lopez. Though her father, who is Palestinian, mistreated her in many ways and abandoned her at age nine,

through Jesus' forgiving grace she forgave him from her heart. She even visited him three times to forgive him in person, despite his rejection. Where did this shy girl get such courage and boldness? It was from her personal experience with Jesus.

Though the Pharisees heard a wonderful testimony, their stubborn hearts were not moved at all. They asked the man again, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" (26) At this moment, the man pointed out their problem: "I have told you already and you did not listen. (You have a listening problem.) Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" (27) Then they became very upset and hurled insults at the man 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 comes from" (28-29). As Moses' disciples, they should have realized that Moses pointed to the Messiah. Jesus' coming fulfilled God's promise to raise up a prophet like Moses from among his own people (Ac 3:22). But they were blinded by their pride. The man was surprised by their hardness of heart and said, "**That is remarkable!**" **Since they admitted ignorance of Jesus' origin, the man** became their Bible teacher. According to his logic, this miracle was unique and notable, for no one had ever heard of a man born blind receiving sight. Only one who came from God could do this. So his conclusion was that Jesus came from God (30-33). In great embarrassment, they responded, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out of the synagogue.

We have heard the word "know" frequently in this section. In fact, it appears 11 times in chapter 9. What each person knows and how they know it is an important theme. The parents knew the man was their son and that he was born blind. But they did not know how his eyes were opened. The Pharisees said they knew that Jesus was a sinner, and they knew that God spoke to Moses, but they did not know where Jesus came from. The man did not know whether Jesus was a sinner or not. But he testified based on one thing he did know. The parents were dishonest due to fear, and the Pharisees were outright liars. Knowledge that is not based on the truth cannot stand. The most powerful knowledge of all was the man's honest testimony about what Jesus had done for him. Sometimes we think that we

need to know more before we can testify about Jesus. But actually, if we have had a personal experience with Jesus, our knowledge is enough. **Thomas Aquinas** was a theologian and prolific writer, whose chief work “Summa Theologia,” is still highly respected. One day he had a powerful revelation of Christ and was overwhelmed by Jesus’ beauty and majesty. Then he said, **“The end of my labors has come. All that I have written appears to be as so much straw after the things that have been revealed to me.”**¹ **////When we testify to what we do know, God can work to glorify Jesus and bless others.** In this graduation season, we celebrate the gaining of knowledge through hard study. This knowledge may help us get a job. But we need more than this. We need knowledge of Jesus from personal experience with him. This knowledge gives us what no other knowledge can: eternal life (Jn 17:3). Let’s pursue the knowledge of Jesus passionately so we can real, lasting truth, and always be able to say, “One thing I do know.”

Second, Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah (35-41). Though the man whose eyes were opened won the debate against the Pharisees, it was very costly for him to testify about Jesus. He was kicked out of his society and his parents had not been supportive. Now he was all alone like a small boat in the vast ocean, and vulnerable. **Jesus heard that he had been thrown out. In that moment, Jesus found him.** What did Jesus do for him? Did Jesus help him find a new job, or provide a place for him to stay? No. He said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (35) Jesus challenged him to have faith in the Son of Man. It was a call to commitment. Jesus wanted to give him the best gift, a heavenly gift, the gift of faith in Jesus. **When he had faith in Jesus, he could have eternal life and inherit the kingdom of God. He could overcome the world (1Jn 5:4-5).**

The man asked, “Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him.” He was ready to commit himself to Jesus, for he experienced Jesus’ love and grace. Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you” (37). Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah. It was the first time the man saw Jesus with his physical eyes. His spiritual eyes also opened. So

¹ <https://www.catholic.com/qa/when-st-thomas-aquinas-likened-his-work-to-straw-was-that-a-retraction-of-what-he-wrote>

he said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him (38). **Faith is not just acknowledging the truth about God.** It is more than that. **/////Faith leads to worship, which is to surrender oneself to God as an act of reverence and adoration.** This man was found to be a true worshiper. When he worshiped, his soul was filled with God's life, inexpressible joy and peace. As a man who had just gained his sight, he might have wanted to see and do many things he could not before. But when he encountered Jesus, believed in him and worshiped him, these things became dim. To him, Jesus was everything. Anyone who has faith in Jesus should worship like this.

Jesus' revelation of himself as the Messiah was special grace to this man. Jesus did not entrust himself to people who sought miracles for their own benefit as stated in 2:24. But he revealed himself to people who opened their hearts and were willing to make a commitment, like his disciples, a Samaritan woman, and this man. Here we learn the secret how we can see Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus reveals himself to those who are humble, open their hearts to him, and commit themselves to him.

In verse 39, Jesus pronounced judgment as the Messiah. His authority to judge came from God (5:22,27). "Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'" **Here we find two kinds of people. //./One kind humbly admit that they are blind.** In their helplessness, they trust in Jesus for salvation. God opens their eyes to see Jesus as the Messiah and they worship him. **The other kind claim that they can see.** They trust themselves and are proud of their knowledge. This blinds them to see Jesus. Jesus does not condemn them by making them blind. They blind themselves by rejecting Jesus. When they do so, Satan works to blind their minds all the more. **2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."** Upon hearing Jesus' words, some Pharisees became very upset, saying, "What? Are we blind too?" (40) Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains" (41).

In chapter 9, we find the words “**blind**” 15 times and “**see**” 10 times. **////There are two kinds of blindness: physical and spiritual, and two kinds of seeing: physical and spiritual.** Physical blindness is relatively uncommon. But spiritual blindness is rampant. The physically blind are fully aware that they are blind. But the spiritually blind are often ignorant of their condition. Physically blind people experience the hardship of their condition. **But the spiritually blind are numb, even though their condition is more serious.** Seeing Jesus is the most important thing in our lives. The question is how we can see Jesus. We should realize that it is easy for us to be blinded by our knowledge, pride, power, self-righteousness, or even fear. In his great mercy, Jesus came to open our eyes to see him. Let’s come to Jesus, the light of the world.