

Sermon for March 23, 2014 – Lent 3

John 9:13–17, 24–39

**Theme: Jesus is the Light of the World.**

- 1) His Light blinds the seeing,
- 2) And makes the blind see.

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> 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 do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided. <sup>17</sup> Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." . . . <sup>24</sup> A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> 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!" <sup>26</sup> Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" <sup>28</sup> Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!" <sup>29</sup> We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. <sup>32</sup> Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out. <sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." <sup>37</sup> Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." <sup>38</sup> Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

Back when I had cable TV, I watched A&E specials like: "Mysteries of the Bible." You know how some people yell at the TV when a referee makes a bad call during a football game? Well, that was me during these A&E specials! I would get so mad seeing how scholars with doctorates from world-renowned universities would get the basics of Christianity so incredibly wrong.

Admittedly, I am a nobody in the academic world. I am certain that the gentlemen in these T.V. specials are far more learned than I. So, whom am I to say that they are wrong when they present their theories about Isaiah not being written by Isaiah or that the flood account is really a myth?

I can say they are wrong because these scholars go against Jesus' clear words of Scripture. You don't need a degree from Princeton, Cambridge, Oxford or Yale to know the truth. Jesus says that he and his Father *have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.*<sup>i</sup> In other words, the person who accepts Jesus' teaching in childlike faith will know the truth about the Bible, God and our salvation. And the scholars of this age? By rejecting the clear truth of Christ, they show themselves to be blind. The more they dig in the Bible – following their thoughts instead of what Jesus clearly teaches – the more blind they get.

Let us see this truth clearly illustrated in our sermon text for this morning, under the theme: **Jesus is the Light of the World.** 1) *His Light blinds the seeing* 2) *And makes the blind see.*

Part One: His light blinds the seeing.

Like the beggar in our Gospel lesson for this morning, all people on this earth are born spiritually blind. Do you want proof of this fact? Look no further than what the LORD says in Romans chapter 3: "*There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*"<sup>iii</sup>

According to our sinful nature, we are all in the dark when it comes to God. We don't know who He is and have no desire to find out. Like the man born blind, we too cannot see spiritually unless God, according to his grace, opens our eyes. And this is exactly what Jesus did for the blind man in our Gospel lesson: He used both the Old Testament promises the man remembered and the Words spoken from Jesus' own mouth to open his eyes of faith.

Our sermon text begins: <sup>13</sup> *They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.*

Why was this man brought before the Pharisees? Because of Jesus. You see, the Pharisees had already decided to call Jesus a false teacher, and that *anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.*<sup>iii</sup>

"But," the Pharisees feared, "if word got out about this miracle . . . There has to be some rational explanation. We can't let people go on believing Jesus is the Christ!" This is why *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."*

The beggar was a simple man. He presents the facts as they happened. He is not going to get into any debate as to how it was possible. What matters to this man is simply what Jesus did. This is enough. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were the scholars who claimed to know the secret things of God. For them, the simple facts were not enough because of the paradox Jesus presented regarding their faith.

<sup>16</sup> *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 do such miraculous signs?"*

One group of Pharisees believed Jesus could not be from God because he did not keep the Sabbath regulations the way they falsely interpreted them. They therefore concluded that there had to be something phony about the "miracle." The other group accepted the reality of the miracle in spite of the alleged Sabbath violations. But this does not mean they believe that he was the Christ. They just interpreted this case as a mystery that needed further investigation. *So they were divided.*

Here we see an example of the blind arguing with the blind about what they see! So often Jesus' words are argued and counter argued about by scholars who simply won't accept the fact that Jesus is our God and Savior. Often times both sides are wrong. The simple truth is often right in front of these men, so plain that our Sunday School children can see it, but these scholars can't. Why? Because many of them won't submit their reason and pride to Christ. They won't admit their spiritual blindness and allow Jesus to open their eyes. And so the light of Christ drives them further into blindness as they try to invent cockamamie theories to explain the Bible

The Pharisees were at a loss. *Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."*

Based on the simple facts of the case, the beggar concluded: *"He is a prophet."*

Yes, Jesus is a prophet. He is the great Prophet the LORD told Moses about when He said: *I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.* <sup>19</sup> *If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.*<sup>iv</sup>

Now consider this: everything surrounding Jesus' astounding miracle points to one conclusion, namely that he is the Christ. But the Pharisees, as is demonstrated by what happens next, would not accept this simple truth. Why? Because they had already hardened their hearts against Jesus, no matter what the clear evidence showed.

This hardened unbelief also shows itself among the Bible "scholars" of today. Take the Jehovah Witnesses, for example. The Scriptures scream out that Jesus is God, but they will not accept this clear teaching. Liberal Christianity does the same thing with creation - explaining away the simple words of Genesis 1 so that evolution can be accepted. They twist passages that speak about homosexuality into mere cultural values that do not apply today. The more liberal scholars search the Scripture, the more blind they become. Why? Because, like the Pharisees, they have already determined in their hearts not to believe the simple truth of Scripture.

Be aware, brothers and sisters in Christ, because our sinful natures are just as proud as that of the Pharisees. We too are tempted to explain away the teachings of Scripture that don't match our preconceived notions. Take note of what happened to the Pharisees and be warned. Be like the blind man who stuck to the simple truth of what Jesus said and did. This showed that his eyes were opened.

Part Two: He makes the blind see.

<sup>24</sup> *A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," 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!"*

The blind man saw in more ways than one. He saw through the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. With a mere show of "righteous judgment", they were trying to persuade this man to their side. (This, by the way, is the tactic of many militant atheists against Christianity: calling Christians names with a scholarly air in order to sway people to their side.) But this tactic doesn't work: the man sticks to the simple facts the Pharisees would not acknowledge.

Frustrated, the Pharisees *asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"* Emboldened by the simple truth, *He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"* <sup>28</sup> *Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!"* <sup>29</sup> *We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."* <sup>30</sup> *The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes."* <sup>31</sup> *We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will.* <sup>32</sup> *Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.* <sup>33</sup> *If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."*

This formerly blind, unschooled man could see more clearly than all the religious scholars combined. He uses the Pharisees' own teachings against them. They themselves correctly said that God doesn't listen to sinners. The Scriptures are clear on that point. So if God listens to Jesus, then he – according to Scripture - must be a godly man who does the LORD's will. On top of this, there is the fact that this miracle is unlike

anything that has ever been done . . . all these facts clearly testify that Jesus is something special – that he might be the Messiah He’s been waiting for (although the blind man does not want to go that far yet - not without first hearing what Jesus says about himself).

Brothers and sisters in Christ: rejoice in the fact that the Lord has opened your eyes to see the simple truth of who Jesus is. So many in this world claim to see, but their unbelief continues to blind them. God, however, happily opens the eyes of all who acknowledge their blindness and need for salvation. Never be ashamed of believing the simple words of Scripture. It is through this childlike faith that God makes you wiser than all the unbelieving scientist and scholars combined.

The proud Pharisees did not take too kindly to being upstaged by a simple beggar. So what do they do? They resort to childish, personal attacks: *"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?"* Oh, what a blessing: Jesus came back to this man to finish the work of opening his eyes of faith.

*"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."* I am sure that this man already started to wonder if Jesus wasn’t the Messiah, but here is the beautiful thing: this man refuses to merely assume. He doesn’t let his thoughts dictate his faith. No, he wants Jesus to direct him. He wants to be reassured through Jesus’ words alone.

*Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."<sup>38</sup> Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.* Yes, the man believed. Why? Because Jesus opened his eyes to see and know just like he opened your eyes and mine to confess our sins and trust in him completely for salvation.

*Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."*

Brothers and sisters in Christ: All people on this earth are born spiritually blind. Who are they that see? Only those that the LORD has so graciously brought to faith in the simple message of Christ crucified for me. The world will despise you for this faith – calling you foolish, ignorant and all sorts of names. But regardless of what the world does, hold on to Christ in simple, childlike faith *for*, as the Scriptures say: *the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*<sup>v</sup> Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Matthew 11:25 NIV84

<sup>ii</sup> Romans 3:10-12 NIV84

<sup>iii</sup> John 9:22 NIV84

<sup>iv</sup> Deuteronomy 18:18-19 NIV84

<sup>v</sup> 1Corinthians 1:18 NIV84