**WHY JESUS?**

**Knowing You Are Right With God**

**John 9:1-41**

20140810

Good morning.

I have to start out with a confession.

This has been a tough sermon to prepare for today. So much so that I have changed it more times than a new born baby. We planned the sermon around one approach to the passage. Then I didn’t like that and changed it and worked on that and changed it and finally last minute this week I gave them a whole new title for the sermon and then on Friday night around 5:00 as I headed home from here I decided to change it again.

This has been more painful than delivering a baby. You say to me, “You have no idea how tough it is to deliver a baby!” And I say to you, “You have no idea how tough it is to deliver a sermon!”

All that to say that Saturday morning I redid the whole thing and I ain’t changin’ it no more, no more, no more, no more. So you will not be able to follow along with me in the teaching notes in the program this morning so feel free to make a paper airplane out of them or line the bottom of your bird cage with them. Maybe that’s what you normally do anyway.

Understand that this is a great passage in our WHY JESUS? study. It is one of my favourite stories in the life of Jesus. It has miracle and tension and humour and sarcasm and pain and a fantastic ending. What I was struggling with was the whole question, the key question in any sermon delivery and that is how do I let this story loose so that it can touch down in each of our lives today. It is the application question. Now there are a lot of application pieces that come out of this passage. In fact it was like I was trying to drink it all in with my mouth open standing in front of a turned on fire hydrant. All these truths and applications and challenges and teachings and so on were driving at me and pouring over me. And I would grab one and go with it for a bit and then feel that wasn’t the best one and so I would go for another and again not feel all that good and so on and so on. But I like where we are this morning. And at some point you have to just stop and preach it. Sundays come with a rather consistent regularity, have you noticed that? So let’s dive into John 9. We are going to go through the whole chapter, all 41 verses. But before we dig into this great story let’s pray.

PRAY

Question.

Do you know for sure that you are a Christian? Do you know inside you a peace with God? Do you know that you are forgiven for everything you have done and for everything you will do and for everything you are that falls short of God’s glory? Do you have this confidence that says that God is your Father and you are his child? Do you know that you have right relationship with God? Do you know for sure that you are a Christian?

Our relationship with God isn’t supposed to be a hope so, think so, maybe so, kind of relationship. We should have a confident “know so” relationship, as much as is possible within the realm of faith. Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have gone to their deaths with an assurance that they were right with God. They clung to it. It was their hope. They knew where they were with God. Do you?

There is nothing like being confident that you are right with God. You know peace, joy, a guilt free life, hope, confidence, and on and on it goes. You cannot have this any other way. It is just that special. Do you know that in your life?

The guy in our story today does. Wow, is he ever confident. I want you and me to be just like him. Ready?

So let’s dive into John 9 and learn

HOW TO KNOW YOU ARE RIGHT WITH GOD

Okay, first off. If you want to know if you are right with God you need to . . .

**KNOW YOU ARE A SINNER**

I know that is not the “politically correct” thing to say. But it is the true and loving thing to say. The whole reason people are not right with God is sin. That’s it. It isn’t because we are not as smart as God or as strong as God or as courageous as God. It is all because we are not as holy as God. We have a sin problem.

The Bible says,

**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

Romans 3:23

So how many of us have the sin problem? All of us do. And it is killing us. It kills us in our relationship with God. It kills us in our relationship with others. It kills us in how we see life and self and so on. We are sinners and we have this sin problem and we need to get it dealt with.

The guy in our story knows he is a sinner.

Look with me then at John 9:1

**As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.**

So Jesus and his disciples are in Jerusalem. He will be in Jerusalem for the rest of the book of John. It is likely that Jesus has stopped with his disciples and pointed out that the man they are looking at, the man who is begging before them is blind and has been blind from birth.

When I was a kid growing up in Toronto there was a boy who lived down the street and around the corner whose name was Bobby. Bobby was completely blind. Bobby was completely blind from birth. I would hang around with Bobby. We were about the same age. And he would show me how he read with brail and how he played and how he used his white cane to help him navigate and so on. He was a great kid. So when I see this man here in John 9 who is blind I have this image of Bobby.

Now understand that when John pens his Gospel he does this two-reality thing. It is his trademark as a writer. He uses metaphors. The primary way he does that is by use our physical reality to talk to us about our spiritual reality. So he will talk about light and doors and birth and shepherds and grape vines and so on. He takes physical realities and uses them to teach us about spiritual realities. He does this over and over again. He is a master at doing this.

So in our story today he is going to use the metaphor of blindness, physical blindness, to teach us about spiritual blindness. So this is the story of a physically blind man being healed. But it is also the story of a spiritually blind man being healed. You have to see those two realities in the story if you are ever going to understand why John includes the story in his book.

This man could not read. He could not work. All he could do to survive was beg. He was likely from a poor family. His parents could not provide for him without him begging. But we also know that in that culture there was a powerful stigma attached to a person with physical disabilities. You pick that up in the questions the disciples have about the man here in verse two.

**His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”**

Now, to get a better feel for what is happening here let’s set the stage and you get to be the man with blindness. Here is how we do it. I want all of you to close your eyes right now. Can you do that? Now image that you are the man born blind. And you are sitting on the dusty ground in the heat of the Middle East and you cannot see anything, you have never seen anything, and you hear this group of people approaching, you can tell by the voices and the shuffling of the feet that it is a large group of about a dozen men and they stop in front of you and talk for a bit and then one man in the group asks a question and you have heard the question before, you have asked yourself this question before because you are in a culture that thinks this way and accuses in this manner

**His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”**

Do you feel the accusation of the questions themselves? Your blindness marks you as a sinner. Not just any kind of a sinner but one who is in this condition because of sin that was so bad, certainly much worse than others, because the sin has caused you to be blind for life. And this is something he would have heard over and over and over again and something he would have felt deep inside.

You can open your eyes now.

You see in Israel at that time they believed that anyone born with a disability has the disability because of a specific sin. Someone sinned. Someone violated God’s laws enough to result in the punishment of a disability. So every time people in Israel saw someone with a disability they thought sinner. And they wondered what was the sin that was so bad that it resulted in this kind of punishment.

Not only did they wonder what the sin was they wondered who the sinner was. There were two options as to the sinner. One, it was the parents. God punished the child because the parents had sinned. So the thinking would be . . . I wonder what your parents did. But that was not the only place they would look. They would also look at the person with the disability and if they were born with it then maybe they sinned in the womb or some even had this wild idea they sinned before they were born. Some kind of life existed before human life and in that life they sinned enough to receive this punishment. The person has a disability, the disability is the result of sin therefore the person has sinned so dramatically that they are being punished in this life for the heinousness of the sin they have committed. This was part of the religious teaching of the day. It was a great tool to judge others and at the same time it was a great way to justify ignoring the need for mercy toward those who were disabled. After all, you are getting what your deserve. Why would I show mercy to you when this is who you are?

Talk about shame. Talk about guilt. Talk about blame.

Now, today we do not believe this exactly but we sorta do. We have this idea that there are direct consequences for the sins we commit. We will often look at our lives and when something bad happens we see it as God punishing us for a sin. Think about it this way. There are consequences for sin and there is punishment for sin. Punishment would happen when God intervenes in a deliberate manner to punish us for wrongs we do. Consequences are the natural result of stuff we do or the condition we are in. You see the world is in chaos, wobbling out of moral orbit, messed up, broken because it is defiled by sin. While it is true that there are consequences for stupid things we do like over eat and take drugs while pregnant and war and so on and so on, those are consequences and not punishments. The vast majority of the pain in this world is because of the condition we are in. It is consequences to our condition and consequences to our actions. Jesus took our punishment on himself.

Jesus drives this truth home when he responds to their multiple choice question this way. He chooses neither option.

**“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus,**

In other words the disability he is living with is not connected directly to any specific sinful act by any one. It is all part of the chaotic consequence of the sin that has tainted our world. We all experience pain because we live in a broken world. We are all sinful.

And the sinfulness that we live with and that we are guilty of while it has made this man physically blind it has made us all spiritually blind. In that sense we are all blind just like this man. We have all sinned. We are all sinners.

We have to start here. We cannot begin to know we are Christians if we don’t start by knowing and admitting that we are sinners. This is the starting point.

**KNOW IT’S ALL ABOUT JESUS**

I am right with God not because of anything I could ever do but only because of Jesus. It is all about Jesus. My hope, my faith, my trust is in a man who walked among us and took my sin on himself for me.

A blind person longs for sight. A blind person needs light. But I cannot give them sight. I cannot be the light. I cannot talk a person into spiritual sight or getting them good enough to see spiritually or religious enough to clear away the cataracts. This is something beyond me. But I can point them to the light.

**I am the light of the world.”**

John 9:5

So the answer to spiritual blindness is not penance for sin, religion, prayer, Bible reading and so on. The answer for spiritual darkness is light. And that light is a person. That person is Jesus.

So watch what happens when Jesus addresses the physical blindness of this guy. What he does physically is symbolic of what he does spiritually.

**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, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.**

John 9:6-7

(If only I had known that verse when I was a kid. “What do you mean it is bad to spit . . . John 9:6 . . . Jesus spits.”)

So the man who has been blind all his life gets two things from Jesus. One is spit. The other is dirt. Kind of a weird recipe, right? I mean the two things you want someone least to do to you is to spit in your eyes or put dirt in your eyes. Jesus does both.

So the guy goes and washes the mud off his eyes. Notice it was on his eyes and not his eyelids. I did not spend a lot of time trying to figure out if the Greek word meant eyeballs or could include both eyeballs and eyelids. I was too busy changing sermons all week. You can do your own word study on that one.

But the guy goes and washes off the spit and the mud and when he does it he sees for the first time in his life. For the very first time he sees.

It wasn’t the spit and it wasn’t the mud that healed him. It was Jesus. Jesus heals this guy.

**KNOW IT’S ALL ABOUT JESUS**

And you will see this so clearly in the remainder of the story. It is all about Jesus.

Well, you say that he went and he washed so look at the part he played. Yep he did act on what Jesus had done. He did do what Jesus had told him to do. But do you think the mud and the spit and the washing made him see or do you think it was Jesus?

He did what Jesus told him to do but what Jesus told him to do did not heal him. Jesus healed him.

When it comes to spiritual blindness we can do a lot of things but it is only Jesus who ultimately heals us. Our ultimate hope is in him and not in the things we do.

*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness.*

*I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.*

*On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand.*

*All other ground is sinking sand.*

I know I am a sinner. I know it’s all about Jesus.

That means that I know that the only remedy for my sin is Jesus. So I come to him as a sinner and I reach out to him praying that he will rescue me from my sin by taking my sin on himself and forgiving me. It is in Christ alone that I trust.

**KNOW I AM A SINNER**

**KNOW IT’S ALL ABOUT JESUS**

**KNOW I HAVE BEEN CHANGED**

You know you are a Christian because you have been changed and you are changing. Your desires change. Your priorities change. Your character changes. You become and begin to become a new kind of person. Christians are different.

And this is so clearly seen in the life of the man born blind as he has his blindness changed and the metaphor of blind to seeing is both physical and spiritual.

Now realize that this is an incredible event. Here is a man born blind who now sees. Nothing like this has ever happened before.

The man goes and washes his eyes and now he can see and he is all fired up about it and he dances around and then goes home to his family. I wonder how he walked home? Can you see him eyes wide open, mouth wide open, colours, shapes, faces, animals, birds, his own hands and feet and arms and legs, children, houses and on and on it goes. I bet it was a long, excited, energized walk home.

**His neighbors 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.”**

So we have three responses to the sight of this guy who grew up among them, the guy they wondered about in terms of what the sin was that was so great that he was born blind. And whether it was his parents’ sin or his pre-birth sin that made this happen to him.

And they are caught off guard.

One group questions. “Is this the beggar who was born blind?” One group answers, “Yes, this is the beggar who was born blind!” A third groups says, “No, it only looks like the beggar who was born blind!”

Let’s try that. Let’s divide the room up into three. Partner with me, will you? This side over here you see the born blind beggar and you ask, “Is this the beggar who was born blind?” Can you say that out loud with me? “Is this the beggar who was born blind?” Okay, middle group in the room can you say, “Yes, this is the beggar who was born blind!” Say it with me, “Yes, this is the beggar who was born blind!” Good job. Okay, let’s go to the group on my right. You say out loud, “No, it only looks like the beggar who was born blind!” Ready, “No, it only looks like the beggar who was born blind!”

Okay let’s see if we can make this happen without me prompting everyone. Ready? “Is this the beggar who was born blind?” “Yes, this is the beggar who was born blind!” “No, it only looks like the beggar who was born blind!” Excellent. Now, let’s do it one more time.

“Is this the beggar who was born blind?” “Yes, this is the beggar who was born blind!” “No, it only looks like the beggar who was born blind!”

Some people are going to believe. Some people are not going to believe. You can be a beggar in a community of people all your life and encounter Jesus and experience a revolutionary change in your life and share that story of new life in Christ with everyone you know and some will believe and some will not. Most will not.

Notice that he insists. The text reads,

**But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”**

John 9:9b

Not, *“Yo, I am da man!”* Rather, *“Hey you guys it is me. I am the beggar who was born blind. Trust me it is me.”*

Then there is a conversation they get into.

**10“How then were your eyes opened?” they asked.**

**11He 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.”**

**12“Where is this man?” they asked him.**

**“I don’t know,” he said.**

**13They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.**

John 9:10-13

You may be wondering why they take this dude to the Pharisees. You’ll see in a minute.

Do you think this guy’s life has changed? Do you think the whole of his world has been reoriented? I mean if all this was was a physical transformation we would agree without hesitation that the change for him is absolutely mammoth. But remember that the physical blindness and the spiritual blindness are both happening here. This guy is so different.

If you are a Christian you can see changes that happened and are that are happening in your life. No changes then there is no Christianity.

I know for some people when they become believers the change in them is huge. It is like bam and they are dramatically different. They talk differently. They act differently. They are just different. And it is a sudden thing.

For others of us it isn’t quite like that. You know we were really young when we realized we were blind and the only way we would ever see is by trusting in Jesus.

We want one of those amazing spiritual stories right? *“Well, I was into drugs and gangs and swore like crazy and got into trouble with the law and realized that I was blind and needed Jesus and so I put my faith and trust in Jesus and my life has never been the same. And it all happened that one night when I was alone in my bedroom just before I graduated into grade two.”*

But the truth is that you cannot trust in Jesus and not change. You cannot be blind and see and it not affect you. Some times there are instantaneous changes and sometimes there are gradual changes but change happens.

**KNOW YOU ARE A SINNER**

**KNOW IT’S ALL ABOUT JESUS**

**KNOW YOU HAVE CHANGED**

**KNOW IT ISN’T GOING TO BE EASY**

Living out the Christian life is not easy peasy. Right? It is tough to live it out. If you live it out you are going to have to make choices that some will not understand. You are going to have to do things people will not get. You are going to have to take a stand people will mock you for. You are going to have to think and act and feel in ways that are contrary at times to who you are and how the world around us thinks and feels and acts.

Our man born blind will find this out oh so quickly.

Look at the next section in the text about this man. I am going to read from my Bible and talk us through what is happening here.

**13They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. 15Therefore 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.”**

**16Some 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.**

**17Then 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.”**

**18They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents. 19“Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”**

**20“We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. 21But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.” 22His 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. 23That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”**

It is rather sad, isn’t it? It is so disappointing that his parents are afraid to speak up about Jesus being the healer. They knew that was the case. You would think that the fact their son can now see would make them so grateful that they would speak up about what Jesus has done. But they are afraid to be booted out of the community.

**24A 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.”**

**25He replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”**

This is such a great verse, isn’t it?

**One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”**

**One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”**

Something has changed and it was the man who did it. I know it and I cannot but rejoice in it and I know it is not the popular thing to believe and not the in thing right now for me to say this but . . .

**One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”**

And it was all because of Jesus.

**26Then they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”**

**27He 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?”**

**28Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! 29We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”**

**30The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. 32Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”**

So what is he saying about Jesus? He is saying that Jesus is a man from God. And if you do not believe this then you are not right. This is a huge thing he is saying.

**34To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.**

There is a price to being a believer in Jesus. Jesus told us we would face it. This man shows us too. Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have died for their faith. You and I may not experience that but to stand up for Christ and to believe he is the only way to God and to live out his moral standards will create tension and even persecution. But this is a sign that you are indeed a follower when you are with a gracious and loving spirit living out your life and discovering the push back and feeling the challenge.

**KNOW YOU ARE A SINNER**

**KNOW IT’S ALL ABOUT JESUS**

**KNOW YOU HAVE CHANGED**

**KNOW IT ISN’T GOING TO BE EASY**

**KNOW JESUS AS LORD**

So they kick him out of the synagogue. They kick him out of the community. And Jesus comes to him and here is what we read,

**35Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**

**36“Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”**

**37Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”**

**38Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.**

John 9:35-38

When you read through the story you will see a kind of progression as this man grows in his relationship with and understanding of Jesus. At first he calls him simply a man, then a prophet, and now Lord.

We get to see him grow in his understanding of Jesus. We get to see him mature in that understanding. But he is now where we all need to be. He is worshipping Jesus.

I can see him down on his knees with his fact to the ground. I can see the formerly dead eyes closed right now with tears spilling out around the edges. I can hear his heart pounding with joy and adoration and amazement.

You know you are a believer when you adore, when you worship, when you exalt, when you place above everything your God and your Saviour Jesus.

We don’t lead perfect lives as Christians. Far from it. But there is a direction and there is a desire that we have and that is fully worship Jesus more and more each and every day of our lives.

There are other signs the Bible describes as being evidence that you are a believer. We have looked at . . .

**KNOW YOU ARE A SINNER**

**KNOW IT’S ALL ABOUT JESUS**

**KNOW YOU HAVE CHANGED**

**KNOW IT ISN’T GOING TO BE EASY**

**KNOW JESUS AS LORD**

So now back to the first question of the day. Do you know, do you have confidence, do you live with the assurance that you are indeed a follower of Jesus and that you are right with God and out of that do you know the joy and peace and forgiveness and assurance that you are His and He is yours?

Pray.