Beyond the Pulpit

RESOURCES FOR CONTINUED STUDY

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN *Presbyterian Church*

Who Sees? *October 18, 2026*

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SERMON SERIES
The Gospel of John
PASSAGE
John 9:24-41

NOTES

In John 9:24–41, the man born blind seems to experience another setback. Once an outsider because of his physical condition, he now becomes a spiritual outcast because he refuses to deny what he knows about Jesus. When the Jewish leaders demand that he condemn Jesus as a sinner, he courageously testifies to what the evidence has made clear: "*Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing*" (vv. 32-33). His willingness to speak the truth costs him his place in the synagogue, as the religious leaders cast him out. But there, on the outside, Jesus seeks him. And the man, rejected by the religious establishment, comes to see Jesus more clearly, moving from recognizing him as a prophet to believing in him as the Son of Man and worshiping him. Meanwhile, those who claim to see remain blind to the One who stands before them. **Who sees?** And where do you find yourself in this story—among the proud who claim to see, or among the humble who recognize their blindness and look to Jesus for sight?

1. The blind man who now sees is cast out (vv. 24-34) and sought out. (vv. 35-38)

In John 9:24-38, the tables have turned. The Pharisees summon the once blind beggar again, insisting that he give glory to God by admitting that Jesus is a sinner. But he refuses to surrender what he knows from firsthand experience: "*One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see*" (v. 25). As the interrogation continues, his understanding of Jesus grows, and his answers expose the weakness of the Pharisees' position. The supposed gatekeepers of spiritual knowledge will not accept the miracle or testimony of this man. Unable to control the narrative about Jesus, they resort to insulting him and casting him out of the synagogue. But the beggar's humiliating rejection by the religious establishment becomes an opportunity for something far greater. Jesus hears that the man has been cast out and seeks him. The man who has lost his place in the religious community is welcomed into the presence of the One he is only beginning to understand. When Jesus reveals his identity as the Son of Man, the man responds in faith: "*Lord, I believe,*" and worships him (vv. 35–38).

READ John 7:14-15, Acts 4:13

DISCUSS In verse 34, the Pharisees are offended that the formerly blind beggar could have anything coherent to say about God and his Word. In the Scriptures, those lacking institutional education–fishermen, shepherds, the economically marginalized–repeatedly demonstrate spiritual insight that surpasses the carefully constructed arguments of the formally trained. Their wisdom emerges through proximity to God and obedience to his Spirit rather than through institutions. How can institutionalized knowledge keep people from seeing the truth?

READ Matthew 5:10-12, John 15:18-21, 2 Timothy 3:12

DISCUSS How might our commitment to Christ put us at odds with others? What can we learn from this man about faithfully bearing witness to Jesus when there is a personal cost?

2. The religious people who think they see are called out. (vv. 39-41)

The encounter concludes with Jesus turning the story into a question of spiritual sight and blindness. He declares that he has come into the world "*that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind*" (v. 39). Some Pharisees hear this and ask, "*Are we also blind?*" They cannot imagine that they might be the ones who need sight. As religious leaders, they assume that their knowledge of Scripture and position within the community give them the ability to recognize God's work. They have made themselves gatekeepers of knowledge,

[1]John Calvin. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, vol. 1,* trans. William Pringle. 1847, Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society.
[2]Richard Bauckham. *The Blurred Cross.* 2024, Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Academic.

confident that they can determine who speaks for God and what God is permitted to do. But their refusal to recognize Jesus reveals the limits of their supposed insight. Jesus condemns and confronts the pride that makes people unwilling to acknowledge their need for him. Their sin remains because they claim to see while refusing the Light standing before them. John Calvin summarizes, "*Since Christ is, by his own nature, the light of the world (John 8:12), it is an accidental result that some are made blind by his coming.*"[1] The man born blind, by contrast, begins with little understanding but responds to the truth as it is revealed to him. John 9 leaves us with an uncomfortable question: Is it possible to know the Scriptures and still fail to recognize Jesus? Might we become so convinced of our own sight that we believe we no longer have anything left to learn? True spiritual sight begins when we relinquish our pride and look to Jesus as the One who alone can open our eyes.

READ Proverbs 3:5-7, 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, James 1:22-25

DISCUSS How can biblical knowledge become an obstacle to faith when accompanied by pride? What practices help us remain teachable and willing to be corrected by God's Word?

READ John 3:3-8, 1 Corinthians 2:12-14, Ephesians 2:1-10

DISCUSS What do these passages teach us about our spiritual inability apart from God's grace and the Spirit's work in opening our eyes to the truth of Christ?

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

In his memoir *The Blurred Cross: A Writer's Difficult Journey with God*, theologian Richard Bauckham reflects on his own struggle with deteriorating eyesight and the questions of faith, suffering, and grace that accompanied it. His poem "*Now I See,*" inspired by John 9:25, brings his personal experience into conversation with the man born blind, celebrating the gift of physical sight as well as the wonder of encountering Christ, the source of all light, grace, and redemption.

"Now I See" (John 9:25)

Into my dimness light splashed.
I was dumbfounded.
Who can name this surging brilliance?
Now with eyes redeemed,
washed full of sight,
I see the light
streaming, free-flowing,
wild and profusely
from the fount of grace.
I see
a luminous world
of meadow flowers
and rippling trees,
birds tumbling out of sunlight,
glistening drops
from summer showers.
In pools of light,
the looking-glasses of the sky,
I see
reflected glory,
earth's returning praise,
all the bright brimmingness
of daylit hours.
At last I see
the haloed head,
the rainbow coloured light
of this new freshened world,
who mixed the mud
and spat the sight into my eyes.
I worshipped.
Who can name this radiance?
Who can doubt his all-redeeming powers?[2]

PRAYER SPOTLIGHT

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