Beyond the Pulpit

RESOURCES FOR CONTINUED STUDY

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN *Presbyterian Church*

When the Light Breaks In! *October 11, 2026*

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SERMON SERIES
The Gospel of John
PASSAGE
John 9:1-23

Having declared himself the *light of the world* in the context of the Feast of Booths, Jesus now demonstrates what happens when his light shines into human darkness. In John 9:1-23, Jesus meets a man who has been blind from birth and frees him from the darkness that has defined his life. As the story unfolds, we discover that the man who could not see begins to see more clearly—not only with his eyes, but with his heart—while those who could see physically become increasingly blind spiritually. As Christ's light shines, it exposes what is hidden: misguided assumptions are challenged, God's power is displayed, and the true allegiances of the human heart are revealed.

When Jesus, the light of the world breaks in, he:

1. Reveals our misguided assumptions (vv. 1-5)

The disciples see the blind man primarily as a theological problem: "*Who sinned?*" Their question assumes that his blindness must be the direct consequence of either his own sin or his parents' sin. They reduce a complicated situation to two possible explanations. R.C. Sproul identifies the disciples' reasoning as a false dichotomy: "*The fallacy is committed when a person reduces possibilities or options to two and only two, when in fact there may be more possibilities. So Jesus, when He heard the question stated this way, essentially answered by saying, 'Neither.' This man had been born blind so many years before in order that, on this particular day, God's kingdom could be manifested through his healing. God's purpose here was to demonstrate who Jesus was. And to this day, two thousand years later, that blind man, who presumably is in heaven today and perhaps has been joined by his children and grandchildren, sits with them and talks about how God used his blindness to demonstrate the identity of Christ. He discovered that his tragic condition was by no means senseless. It had a divine purpose that has borne witness to Christ through all history.*"[1] Jesus challenges his disciples assumptions and teaches them to trust that God's purposes are often greater than what we can see.

READ Heidelberg Confession, Lord's Day 10 (Q&A 27 & 28)

DISCUSS When something difficult happens that we cannot explain, what are some of the assumptions we are tempted to make about God, ourselves, or others? How does the Heidelberg Catechism's teaching on God's providence give us a better way to respond?

2. Displays his sovereign power (vv. 6-12)

Jesus does what no human remedy could accomplish: he gives sight to a man blind from birth. Ben Witherington notes that the giving of sight to the blind is associated with God's sovereign power: "*By way of background, it is crucial to bear in mind that there is no story of giving sight to the blind anywhere in the OT. Nor do we find such a miracle attributed to any of Jesus' followers during his ministry. In Hebrew scriptures, the giving of sight to the blind is associated with God's own activity or with that of his chosen one, but with no one else.*"[2] The miracle is evidence of Jesus' messianic identity. He does what Scripture says God alone can do.

READ Exodus 4:11; Psalm 146:8; Isaiah 29:18, 35:5, and 42:7

DISCUSS By recording this miracle, what do you think John is attempting to say about Jesus?

READ Genesis 2:7

DISCUSS Why might John emphasize that Jesus used dirt to restore the sight of a man born blind? How does this echo Genesis 2:7?

NOTES

[1]R.C. Sproul. *Human Tragedies, Divine Purposes.* July 6, 2026. Ligonier.org. https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/human-tragedies-divine-purpose
[2]Ben Witherington, III. *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel.* 1995, Louisville, KY. Westminster John Knox Press. 180
[3]John Calvin. *Calvin's Commentaries, Volume 18.* 2003, Ada, MI. Baker Publishing. 203

3. Exposes our true allegiances (vv. 13-23)

The Pharisees cannot rejoice over the miracle because Jesus performed it on the Sabbath. Their allegiance is ultimately to their interpretation of the law and their traditions. Even when confronted with undeniable evidence, they resist the implications of Jesus' work. In contrast, the formerly blind man increasingly identifies himself with Jesus, calling him first "*the man called Jesus*" and then "*a prophet*." His parents, however, retreat in fear because confessing Jesus as Christ could result in expulsion from the synagogue. Thus, as the Light breaks in, the unexpected happens: the man who is physically blind begins to see, while those who claim to see retreat further into spiritual darkness. As John Calvin observes, Christ's light reveals the blindness of those who proudly refuse to submit to him.[3]

READ Mark 7:1-13; Matthew 15:1-9; Colossians 2:20-23

DISCUSS Discuss how institutionalized traditions can prevent us from seeing the truth? When the light of Christ conflicts with our traditions, how do we tend to respond?

READ Isaiah 59:9-13

DISCUSS Describe the parallels between the religious leaders of Jesus' day and the Isaiah passage. What do both passages reveal about the relationship between spiritual blindness and rebellion against God?

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Punching Holes in the Darkness

As a young boy in Edinburgh, Scotland, a story is told of 12-year old Robert Louis Stevenson, how one night his nanny caught him peering through his bedroom window. Staring intently into the night, he was mesmerized by the local *"leerie,"* or lamplighter, walking down the shadowy streets, igniting the gas lamps with his torch. When his nanny asked him what he was doing, Robert turned from pressing his face against the frozen window pane and excitedly responded, *"Look, he's punching holes in the darkness!"*
What a great illustration of Jesus' earthly ministry! The *Light of the World* encounters a man who has lived in darkness since birth, opens his eyes, and begins to reveal to him what others cannot see.
How can you be a lamplighter?

- When you love your enemies and bless those who curse you, you are punching holes in the darkness.
- When you choose to forgive instead of hate, you are punching holes in the darkness.
- When you sacrifice resources for the sake of others, you are punching holes in the darkness.
- When you stand for truth with humility and grace, you are punching holes in the darkness.

READ Matthew 5:14-16

DISCUSS In John 9, Jesus' light exposes darkness and enables people to see what they could not see before. How can our words and actions, as reflections of Christ's light, help others see the truth of the Gospel?

PRAYER SPOTLIGHT

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