

Series: Portraits of Jesus in John	Reference: <i>John 9</i>	Title: The Light	Date: 04.05.2020
Website Writeup: John paints his next portrait of Jesus as the Light of the World. We can choose to walk in the light or stay in the darkness, and that is the question we struggle with throughout life.			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

Memory Verses for this Series - about 1 every 2 weeks

I loved the show *Overhaulin* where they'd find some guy who has an old broken down wanna-be-hotrod in his garage, the guy who always wanted to restore his car but couldn't afford it, and they'd steal it for a week. Someone usually impersonates a police officer, informing the guy they're looking for his car. Within a week they overhaul his ride to a cherry hotrod. Then call the guy in telling him they found his car. He walks in, overcome with tears, ending with him looking at the camera saying, "My name's Joe Smith & I've been overhauled!" I love the cars, overhauled to the point you wouldn't recognize them - even the owner's overwhelmed & can't believe it's his car.

Turn to John 9 if you have a Bible with you. Today we'll hear about a man overhauled by Jesus, blind & begging in the streets. An impoverished broken down man made new as his sight is restored. He says to the Pharisees, as he's questioned, "I've been overhauled by Jesus!" Here's the story starting in 9:1 of John: *As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

This is John's next portrait of Jesus, this time as the Light of the world. Continuing in v6...*⁶ After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. ⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went & washed, and came home seeing.*

John's Gospel is full of water! Remember all we've studied thus far - this is the pool of water the crippled man had tried to get into when Jesus healed him. Symbolizing the gentle flow of living, healing water which God sent into the Temple. It was near the Sheep Gate imaging the coming Messiah where the sacrificial sheep were brought in & bathed in preparation for the sacrifice, imaging the coming perfect sacrifice of Jesus. It was the water they drew during the Feast of Tabernacles - to which Jesus equated Himself as salvation to everyone.

Continuing in v8...*⁸ His neighbors & those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit & beg?" ⁹ Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."*

He's been overhauled, and some don't recognize him as the same man. Continuing in V10...¹⁰ *"How then were your eyes opened?" they asked.* ¹¹ *He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud & put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam & wash. So I went & washed, and then I could see."*

We have again the concept of Light, questions of sin, living water, washing, healing, blindness, and all this comes together in a powerful image of Jesus as the light of the world if we're also careful to look at surrounding passages. If you remember last week the Scribes & Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery before him to trap Him, but He'd turned the tables on them. And following that, in chapter 8, it's all about conversations Jesus has with the leaders about who He is, and who they are. And here are a few things He says...firstly in V12 of Chapter 8... ¹² *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* So, He brings up this concept of light among the people with these Guardians of Truth listening in, as He does again with this blind man.

And He also says in V24 of Chapter 8... ²⁴ *I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.* He also says in V47 of Chapter 8, ⁴⁷ *Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.*

Jesus has been quite frank & open about not only who He is, as the light of the world, the Messiah & their Salvation. But also clear about who these leaders are, the most religious people present - they're sinful men who actually *don't* know God! He's making very bold claims about Himself, including the fact that Abraham looked forward to seeing Jesus' day come about. We know Abraham's the spiritual father of the Jews, who lived 1700 years before Jesus. But Jesus says in v56 of chapter 8...⁵⁶ *Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it & was glad.* And throughout this remember people are putting their faith in Jesus as He addresses these leaders & they listen in. Which only serves to further infuriate the leaders & they say, ⁵⁷ *"You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham!"* And Jesus answers at the end of chapter 8 - *"before Abraham was born, I am!"* Another direct claim to divinity, using the same Old Testament term God the Father used for Himself - 'I am'. And they pick up stones & try to kill Him..but Jesus slips away.

So, we have to understand what happens before to understand this blind man's story here, since it's all connected. In light of what Jesus just said to them, He grabs hold of this blind man, heals His blindness which is from birth - something no one's ever done, using this situation as a spiritual metaphor for those leaders & also us. We have a broken blind beggar who didn't expect to see that day. Jesus singles him out, lost in a world of darkness, as those whom Jesus addresses are lost in spiritual darkness. Although Jesus has been clear as to who He is & what He offers, they remain in the dark. There was once a time in all our lives when we lived in spiritual darkness. Jesus singled us out & punched a hole in the darkness bringing light into our lives. Possibly, you're

sensing that breakthrough for the first time right now! If so, listen closely to who Jesus is to you.

But like all Guardians of Truth who cease to follow Truth, these leaders don't listen, they can't see. It's a classic case of, 'We've made up our minds, don't confuse us with the facts.' They ask in 9:12... ¹² *"Where is this man?"* Meaning Jesus. *"I don't know,"* he says. So they start interrogating the guy. He tells them how it happened, but all they're concerned about is revealed when they say, *"This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."* Because Jesus healed him on the Sabbath, which He seems to do quite often, maybe to stir thinking. The seed's being planted, because even some of these leaders ask, *"How can a sinner perform such signs?"* Division in the ranks, they're losing control, the Spirit's moving. So, they ask the blind man what he thinks. He responds, *"He's a prophet."* Or, someone to whom we should listen.

They still won't believe it & go to his parents for proof - his parents confirm it's him, but direct them back to the man, since his parents are afraid of being excommunicated. It's already been decided, anyone acknowledging Jesus as Messiah is to be put out of the synagogue. They're afraid of what people think. So, they've asked him, his parents & now go back to man again!

V24...²⁴ *A 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."* 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!"* Their religious pride keeps them blind. Intent on being Guardians of Truth unable to see God work. Digging for answers they only *want* to hear. Which says, we can think ourselves theological experts & still totally miss the work of the Spirit. The Jews had been entrusted with the very words of God, and these Pharisees serve as a reminder that we can know a lot about scripture (as we should), but still not recognize His work.

They continue in V26...²⁶ *Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"* ²⁷ *He answered, "I have told you already & you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"* ²⁸ *Then they hurled insults at him & said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."* ³⁰ *The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. ³² Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."* ³⁴ *To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.*

Jesus made His claims clear & asked them to listen, but they're blinded by pride, still trying to win arguments, *"We've made up our minds, don't confuse us with the facts."* Remember, these guys viewed the regular people as rabble who didn't understand the law. But the experts are getting a theology lesson from a formerly blind beggar. Beggar-man preaching truth to what should be Preachers of truth.

This man moves from saying, ‘the one they call Jesus’, onto ‘prophet’, now to Jesus is ‘a man of God’ - a man to be followed, who works & speaks for God. The irony is, the religious elite, who consider themselves better than others, turn out to be blind, lost in darkness, begging for answers. Jesus uses this physical ailment to communicate a spiritual reality to these leaders - Jesus brings light to everyone who’ll receive Him, but spiritual blindness remains for the stubbornly prideful.

V35...³⁵ *Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”* (A messianic title.) ³⁶ *“Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”* ³⁷ *Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”* ³⁸ *Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.* ³⁹ *Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”* ⁴⁰ *Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this & asked, “What? Are we blind too?”* ⁴¹ *Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.*

This man progressed from seeing Jesus as one among many, to one to whom we should listen, onto one to be followed. And now he sees Him as one worthy of worship. The Beggar sees Jesus for who He truly is. They cast him out & Jesus goes looking for Him, bestowing ‘light’ on a man blind from birth who’d never known light, in more ways than one. But let’s not miss the other message - those who claim to *know* Truth, but refuse to follow, actually choose spiritual darkness & are deemed guilty. They’ve heard & even seen, and still refuse to believe. And Jesus says later in chapter 20, *blessed are those who’ve not seen & yet have believed*. Speaking of you & me!

What does this mean for us? In past weeks we’ve heard a lot about who Jesus is. We’ve looked at God the Holy Spirit & what He means in our lives. We could identify with one of four people in this story; the blind man, the confused crowd, this man’s parents afraid of what people think, or the Guardians of Truth refusing to follow because Jesus doesn’t fit their religious tradition. Maybe you’ve met Jesus, received the Holy Spirit & walked with Him for years. Maybe you’ve grown up in ‘church’ & as a result you’ve become a lifeless prideful Guardian. We don’t want to be Guardians, we want to be Followers. What’s holding us back? Isn’t it fear? If so, a fear of what?

Firstly, it may be the **Fear of Rejection**. To follow Jesus has implications for relationships. We might fear, in following Jesus others may reject us, or think us stupid. A girlfriend or boyfriend may break up with us, since they don’t see Him the same. Work may be affected, I might have to find another job. Family & friends may not like me, since my life & choices will change. Some develop dualistic lives as a result. They’re one thing in church, another with friends, family, or at work.

We live in a world rife with conflicting opinion & thought on God & Spirituality. God has chosen to communicate Himself through the Bible, the person of Jesus Christ & the Church. Yet, there’s an undercurrent within Christian circles challenging the origins &

trustworthiness of His Word, although it's the most backed up uncontested ancient writing there is - nothing compares to the Bible's textual integrity & witness. When I was a new Christian I had a passion for the Bible & wanted to follow Jesus. Over time I allowed myself to be swayed by various conflicting voices, inside & outside the church, which ate away at scriptural integrity, instead of simply standing on biblical Truth. I didn't want to sound stupid, dogmatic, or as a fanatic. I didn't yet know how to speak about, or rectify difficult topics. Praise God the Holy Spirit immersed me in the Word allowing it to define my thinking, taking every thought captive to Christ, no matter what others thought of me. Integrity, standing on God's Word, despite what the current cultural climate teaches. God's Word is life & light to everyone & it's important I live it out as Jesus would have me. The Pharisees weren't wrong in knowing the Word, they just didn't allow God to speak through it. They didn't recognize the Living Word standing before them. It was intellectually prideful, not humbly convicting.

A good church will hold to foundational beliefs universally held by all Christians, yet provide an atmosphere where people can question & wrestle with who Jesus is via Scripture openly. That's an art - to walk in grace & mercy while still upholding the standards of holiness which we're called to in the Scriptures. We saw this last week in John 8 when Jesus both acted with compassion, but also held everyone to the standards of holiness with the story of the adulterous woman.

Are we willing to allow the Scriptures to challenge long held errant beliefs, or unflinching pride? Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide with compassion & understanding rooted in truth? Because sometimes we believe what we believe not based on God's Word under the leading of the Holy Spirit, but on what culture dictates, even church culture. And when the Holy Spirit challenges that, we go through stages of emotion. The first being *defensiveness* - where we automatically disagree, and turn to proof texts which we've developed over years to make us feel comfortable about false convictions such as these Pharisees do. Faith's informed & defined by a healthy diet of the Scriptures who testify about Christ, led by the His Spirit in community with mature believers. I can't let my precious reputation get in the way, being more concerned with acceptance & what others think, swimming with the current, when Jesus demands swimming against it at times.

Then there's **the fear that God won't show up**. This fear goes back to our conversation 2 weeks ago about life with the Holy Spirit. What if I pray & God doesn't come through? When Covid-19 strips away all our safety nets? Was Nietzsche right, is God dead? Is faith a farce? This fear leads us to feel we need to cover for God. We ask for less, expect less & satisfied with less, afraid to ask for & expect more. God's pained when His children pull back in this way. The questions we really need to ask are, do I believe God keeps His promises even in the midst of pain & loss? Do our prayers & actions give evidence to a vibrant faith even in isolation, the loss of income & in the face of death? When I pray, do I pray truly asking for what He wants, or what I want? The question for us right now is not what is God NOT doing, but what He IS doing?

I've been asked to pray over many. Often I receive direction from the Spirit translating to action for the person - such as Jesus saying to people, "Go & sin no more." God may reveal their difficulties are a result of choices they've made, or an unhealthy lifestyle. God might be telling them they need to repent & be transformed, but they refuse since they want an instant cure - not true freedom. In their minds God didn't work, heal, or fix their situation. Yet, His direction's disregarded. A little bit of what may be faith in them dies since they've chosen to remain in darkness. Often times these requests are inconsistent with His will & mission, to which God says 'no', or gives different direction. And, we have to also admit there are evil forces in the world as well working against us. It comes down to Trust, do we really believe God knows best & are we committed to listening & following even in the bleakest moment?

The final fear is the opposite, **the fear of God showing up**. What if God actually does show up? The truth is most don't want to be led by anyone but themselves, let alone the Word & Spirit of God. The idea of giving control to something else is frightening - what will they ask me to do, where will they ask me to go? Will it be uncomfortable? The answer is *yes*, I can promise the Holy Spirit will lead you to things & ministry you normally wouldn't choose, but it's good for you. Painful, but good. Risky & uncomfortable, but wonderful. Jesus doesn't seek to hurt us, but to grow & use us in kingdom ministry - and that is always the best for us & others around us.

An example is the character Eustace in CS Lewis's book, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Eustace due to his choices & stubborn attitude towards Aslan turns into the personification of sin, a dragon. To turn back into a boy the dragon skin has to be painfully stripped away to get to who Eustace is really meant to be. Eustace tries himself, but it doesn't work. Aslan, as the God-figure, must do it for him. And when asked how it felt Eustace says, "It hurt, but it was a good sort of pain, sort of like having a thorn pulled from your foot." The Holy Spirit will lovingly strip away all that holds you back from Jesus to make you who you're really meant to be & that's a wonderfully painful process.

How do you want to live your life? As a confused part of the crowd never coming to a final decision about Jesus? The timid parents of this man, afraid of being kicked out of the club? The Guardian of Truth, never following, just living your life to win arguments, with no spiritual power? Or, the poor beggar, overhauled, following Jesus into a wonderful Kingdom life? Open to seeing where the Spirit will lead, open to having the Scriptures round out your view of God for the rest of your life?

If you identify with the blind man, just now seeing that light, email me & I want to pray with you to receive the seal of the Holy Spirit today. Jesus can overhaul your broken life. If you're like the parents, afraid of what others may think, let's pray through that. If you're a part of the crowd confused about who He is, email me, we can talk. And if you find yourself as a Guardian, email me & we can pray that you can humbly follow Jesus once again knowing He's not done with you yet, and He's doing something now in our world through our current situation! We're all in a sense going through the pain of being overhauled right now, in many shared & different ways! AMEN!

Community Group Questions:

1. Icebreaker: What new skill or piece of your identity have you developed while in quarantine? Do you see something new growing inside of you? Maybe now you're a professional chef or an IT specialist in your house or you've taken up Zumba or crafting???
2. This week's sermon encourages us to open ourselves up to the healing touch of the light of Jesus. Take your Bibles and read John 9.
3. There are 4 kinds of characters in this story:
 1. The blind man
 2. The confused crowd
 3. The man's parents
 4. The Guardians of Truth

Who do you identify with in this story? Why?

4. Jason identified some key fears that may hold us back in our interaction with and relationship with God:
 1. Fear of Rejection
 2. Fear that God won't show up
 3. Fear that God will show up.

Have you seen any of these evident in someone else's life (don't have to share, just think)? How about your own? Sometimes it's easier to first think of someone else before we think of ourselves.

5. Have you ever experienced the power of surrender? We think about this specifically with surrendering to God, but maybe it's easier to think of surrender towards something else first as a spring board. A diet? A lifestyle choice? Another person or process? Recovery? Forgiveness? The possibilities are endless and a lot of them are related to God's work in our lives too! Share a story of surrender with the group.

6. Jason's final prompt this week was, "*How do you want to live your life? As a confused part of the crowd never coming to a final decision about Jesus? The timid parents of this man, afraid of being kicked out of the club? The Guardian of Truth, never following, just living your life to win arguments, with no spiritual power? Or, the poor beggar, overhauled, following Jesus into a wonderful Kingdom life? Open to seeing where the Spirit will lead, open to having the Scriptures round out your view of God for the rest of your life?*"

With this in mind, how can we pray for each other this week?