

Glory

John 9:1-41

Key Verse: 9:24

“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.’”

Today, after a five-week hiatus, we return to John’s gospel and study chapter 9. In this chapter there is a man who was born blind. Jesus heals him and he is able to see the point and purpose of his life. This chapter brings up some very interesting questions for our lives. Why are we here? What are we living for? Why do we do the things we do? And what is the point of all the random circumstances that make up our lives? These are like the questions of the ages. These are the golden questions that people think about and try to answer. With such profound questions, we expect complex and profound answers, but honestly, I’m surprised at how simple the answer to all these questions really is and I can tell you in four words: give glory to God. We are here to glorify God and John 9 shows us how that’s true.

Chapter 9 is actually a continuation of the narrative that began two chapters ago. At the end of the last chapter, Jesus had been teaching about his eternity, but the crowd of people around him wanted to stone him, but, because it was not his time, Jesus slipped away unharmed. As Jesus was walking along with his disciples, they noticed a blind man beside the road. This guy had some sort of infamy. It seemed that everybody knew that he was born blind. The disciples asked Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (2) The disciples just nearly got killed because the crowd, who at one time believed Jesus, tried to kill Jesus. They were having a pity party on themselves and when they saw this man who was in an even more pitiful condition, they wanted to feel better about themselves and what better way does sinful man know to feel better than to make someone else feel worse? Right in front of this man, they decide to ask a very insensitive question. “What did this man or his parents do that caused him to be born blind?” The disciples make a terrible assumption. You might have heard this, but it was common thought that if someone did something bad, then something bad would happen to them. If something really bad happened to you, then you must have done something really wrong. If you had done everything right, then nothing bad would happen to you. It’s not an uncommon thought even nowadays. The thought of karma is quite popular. Good things come to good people and bad things come to bad people. We revel in the thought because it seems like simple justice. Look at most of the movies out there. The good people win, and the bad people lose. That’s the way we think it should be and we have a sense of entitlement about it. We deserve good things because we are good people.

But Jesus was thinking a little differently. “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’” (3) Jesus said that the man’s blindness was not caused by anyone’s sin, but so that the works of God might be displayed. It wasn’t the man’s fault that he was blind. He didn’t kill someone in a past life and end up miserable in this one. The man was blind so that God could be glorified. That sounds kind of mean. Did God made the man blind so that God could be glorified? If so, then God sounds full of himself. But God is not cruel and selfish. He is the source of all life, and when we step away from him, we’re like computers running on battery power, we can work for a while, but eventually power will run out and we die. God’s plan is to connect us back to him the source of power by dying for us. That is not selfish. God is so powerful that even tragedy and pain can be turned to joy. Because of that God’s plan for everything is bigger than we could imagine. We’re like ants criticizing the location of a string without being able to see the entire tapestry. Something might be inconvenient to us at a moment in time, but the weaver is creating a vast

tapestry of creation where, when everything comes together, the result is beauty beyond imagination. God can use all things for his glory.

After Jesus said this and reaffirming that he is the light of the world, Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud and puts it on the man's eyes. Honestly, if I was the blind man, I would be emotionally conflicted. The disciples were picking on him, but Jesus comes to say God was going to work in his life. Then, he hears someone spitting on the ground and feels someone put mud on his eyes. I'm certain that he knew that the mud was made out of spit. How could this be the work of God? It's practically insulting. Even after the mud, Jesus tells the man to wash in the Pool of Siloam. Jesus tells a blind man to feel his way to a pool that was who knows how far away. The guy has got to be conflicted in his heart. The amazing thing was that the man actually went to the pool and washed, and he went home being able to see.

What was even more amazing to his neighbors was that the man could see. "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.' But he himself insisted, 'I am the man.'" (8-9) People who saw the man everyday could not believe that he was the blind man. Who has ever heard of a man born blind being able to see? They wondered how this could have happened and the man told them that it was Jesus who healed him. Was this the work of God that Jesus was talking about? A little, but it was only the beginning.

The neighbors brought the man to the Pharisees. The day that Jesus performed the healing was the Sabbath the day of rest, and if you remember, Jesus healed on the Sabbath before and the Pharisees were more than a little upset that Jesus was not keeping their rules about the Sabbath, so they wanted to find out more about what had happened to the blind man. "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.'" (15) The man gave a straightforward testimony that Jesus put mud on his eyes and he washed and now he could see. It was simple, but the Pharisees were unconvinced. "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 perform such signs?' So they were divided." (16) The Pharisees didn't know what to make of it. Some thought that since Jesus didn't keep their rules for the Sabbath, then he's not from God. Others could not deny that Jesus healed the man and how could a sinner do such things?

The Pharisees couldn't make up their minds, so they wanted to find out what the man thought and the man called Jesus a prophet. Predictably, the man's words did nothing to placate the Pharisees. Many of them were not convinced that he was previously blind, so they went and called his mom and dad to find out if this was truly their blind son. "'We know he is our son,' the parents answered, 'and we know he was born blind. But 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.' His 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. That was why his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'" (20-23) His mom and dad were probably overjoyed to find that their son could now see, but when they were brought in front of the Pharisees, fear gripped their heart. They passed the buck back to their son because they were afraid of being put out of the synagogue. It's not like getting kicked out of the church. If someone were put out of the synagogue, then they were essentially removed from society.

They wouldn't have any friends anymore and they wouldn't have any business dealings. Their entire livelihood would be lost and they would have nothing.

When the man's mom and dad wouldn't tell them much, the Pharisees brought the man back and turned up the heat. "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." (24) Before they were divided, but now they said that they knew that Jesus was a sinner. The Pharisees told the man to give glory to God by telling the truth. And the man did just that. "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!'" (25) It was the simple truth. The man didn't know all that much about Jesus, but he knew that he was blind and could now see. The Pharisees were completely out of their element. They kept asking the man the same questions. They wanted to know how Jesus healed the man. The man asks them why do they want to hear it again, and he throws fuel on the fire by asking if they wanted to be Jesus' disciples.

Oh man, the Pharisees really didn't like those words. "Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." (28-29) Any rationality the Pharisees had during the questioning was just thrown out the window. They insulted the man, called themselves disciples of Moses and said that Jesus is a mystery. And then, here comes the best part of the whole narrative. "The man answered, 'Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.'" (30-33) Those are just beautiful words. This former blind man was teaching the Pharisees about God through his healing, and here we have the works of God. You can see the man working it out throughout his testimony before the Pharisees. The man started out by simply calling Jesus a prophet, but by the end he knew, he outright knew, that Jesus was from God. The man knew that the power that had healed him had come from God.

The Pharisees just exploded at these words. "To this they replied, 'You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!' And they threw him out." (34) Then, Jesus heard about what happened to the man and found him. Jesus asked him if he believed in the Son of Man. The man asked, "Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him." Then Jesus revealed that he is the Son of Man and the man worshiped him. That's the full narrative about this man. He starts out being blind and probably feeling ridiculed, but at the end he is worshiping Jesus as God.

Jesus said that the man's blindness would show the works of God that it would show the glory of God. And you can see the man physically healed and spiritually growing stronger as the Pharisees were questioning him. They told him to give glory to God and tell the truth and that is just what he did. He knew that God had healed him and he testified to the Jewish leaders about Jesus. This man's life existed to glorify God and if you look at the passage you can see that out of all the people in the passage, only this man seems to have peace and power. That's because only this man is living for the glory of God.

The Pharisees were living for the law and tradition. They tip their hands in verse 28 when they said that they were disciples of Moses. They did not say that they were disciples of God, but of the man who shared with them the law. The Pharisees were living to keep that law

and when God himself came to them, he didn't fit with their ideas and they vehemently opposed him. Look at the Pharisees in this passage, they start off conflicted, not knowing if Jesus were a sinner or from God, and end up in a rage, throwing the man out of the synagogue. They completely ignore the fact that the man was blind and could not see. The evidence was in front of them, but they could never reach the right conclusion. Although, they could physically see, they were blind to the fact that God had come to be with them.

Similarly, the man's mom and dad lived fearfully. Like I said, they were probably so filled with joy because their blind son was now able to see. He was no longer stuck begging in order to survive. It was a joyous day. That was, until they were called before the Pharisees. As they stood in the chamber, they never once thanked God or gave glory to him for healing their son. Instead, they were fearful because they were living for people. The man's mom and dad were afraid of getting kicked out of the synagogue and losing all connection with the people and losing their livelihood. That was more important to them than even their own son, because they didn't support him, but pushed the Pharisees' gaze back on him. They didn't want to lose what they valued the most, but they didn't seem to care that their son would lose the same thing.

Now, I don't want to pick on the Pharisees and the parents with a lens of 2000 years of hindsight, and declare ourselves as superior. What they were doing is common even among us. Divisions in the church that created the many of the denominations were because people were holding to something other than God. We defend our thoughts and way of life with terrible words like the Pharisees. Look at internet comment sections. When a person feels attacked by someone, they respond with a level of hatred and venom that's just remarkable and it is tenfold if someone mentions Jesus. Or we hold back not sharing our faith with someone because we are afraid of losing their friendship. We value their friendship more than God or his salvation. We don't want to lose them and we compromise our faith

But take another look at this man. He was living for God. It did not matter to him that he would get kicked out of the synagogue. It did not matter to him that Jesus didn't fit some predefined mold. Jesus healed him with power from God, so Jesus must be from God. It was simple and didn't have a lot of high-level theological arguments. It simply had Jesus. By giving glory to God and focusing his life on Jesus, the man could stand in front of the same people who terrified his parents, the same people who would put Jesus to death, and be filled with peace and conviction, and be able to lecture those who were questioning him. Everyone else seems dysfunctional in this passage, but this man is shining a light in the darkness. This man has a purpose.

So, what is your purpose? You might think that the man had reason to glorify God because he was healed. Well, that's true, but there is more. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." It's not only when great things happen to us that we should glorify God, but in everything that we do. Even the small things like eating and drinking should give glory to God. In fact, when we are in the worst of situations, it is usually when God can be glorified the most. To have peace amidst a storm is very powerful.

There was a woman born in 1820 named Francis Jane Crosby. When she was two months old, she became ill, and a man pretending to be a doctor prescribed that something be put on her eyes as a cure. That cure blinded her and a few months later he father died, leaving her mother to raise her. She had a lot to be pitied over. One pastor remarked later in her life, "I

think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when he showered so many other gifts upon you.” But Crosby, who had written over 9000 hymns, immediately replied, “Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I was born blind? Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.” Crosby’s condition did not dictate her mood. She was not resentful for her blindness, but she brought so much joy and hope even today. Fanny gave glory to God.

There is a 10-year old boy named Christopher Duffley. He was born prematurely, weighing 1 lb 12 oz and was blind and autistic because his birth mother was doing drugs while pregnant. Stephen and Christine Duffley adopted Christopher and before he could hold a conversation, he was singing. When he was 4 he went in front of his church and began to sing *Open the Eyes of My Heart*. I put of him performing at a Christian event on Facebook a few weeks ago. When you hear his voice, you don’t hear a blind, autistic boy. Instead, you hear a boy giving his whole heart singing praises to God. He is an encouragement to many who think that their situation is too rough for them to give glory to God. Christopher gives glory to God.

Now, I know that a lot of us here have faced their share of struggles. There are people here who are struggling financially, who are searching for a job, and who have immigration challenges. So many of us struggle with what the future holds and we can be gripped with fear, controlled by anger, or we can give glory to God. Where do you stand? Jesus, our Lord and Savior, came to calm our fears and quell our rage. Jesus took our struggles and took our pain and bore them on the cross along with our sins. Jesus died on the cross so that we could be set free from the things that bind us to fear and rage. Those things don’t matter. We need to live for God.

My life doesn’t glorify God. You don’t have to worry about me standing here acting pious saying that everything is great. My key verse last year was Habakkuk 3:17-18. “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.” I didn’t follow that at all. I’ve been both gripped by fear and enflamed by rage. I don’t know when I will ever be able to share any bit of my faith with my parents. Every time we visit them, I am just reminded of my fear. When things don’t go the way that I want them, I become frustrated and just start lashing out. Neither of these things gives glory to God and only threatens to destroy relationships, either my relationship with God or my relationship with others. I can’t find peace by getting my own way or by holding on to my family. I really have to hold on to God. I really have to put Jesus at the absolute center of my life. It should be my life’s desire to know Jesus more and my life’s work to share him with others.

Jesus died for me to restart my life and he died for you to restart yours. As Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” (39) We were blind and Jesus healed us. He gives us a point of new beginning to live the life we were meant to live, a life that glorifies God despite the circumstances that we are in. Jesus is someone who deserves to be glorified. God doesn’t demand glory, but he sure deserves it. Instead of doling out wrath because everybody deserves it. Everyone has broken God’s law, but God responds with mercy by taking our place. Isn’t that glorious? How do you respond to that glory?