

I Need a Miracle, part 1 – “Blind Man Seeing”

Scripture: John 9:1-16

Good morning. Before we get started, I want you to take a look around you. The people around you love you, they appreciate you, and they are here to worship God with you. You are in the right place this morning. You are not here by accident. Your presence matters to us, and it matters to God. Let's give God thanks and praise for bringing us all together this morning.

Would you pray with me? Lord, if you have something to tell us this morning, we are ready to listen. Speak your word to us. Test our hearts and show us anything we need to change. Show us your eternal way. Amen.

We are starting a new series this week called, “I Need a Miracle.” I have always been fascinated by the miracles of Jesus. I wish I could have been a witness to them. Well, I don't have a time machine, but I do want us to journey through five miracles of Jesus over the next few Sundays and ask, “What do they show us about God and about ourselves?”

There are so many miracles, it was hard for me to narrow them down, so I used Matthew 11:4-6 as my guide. When the John the Baptist was in prison, he wanted proof that Jesus was the Messiah. This is what Jesus replied. “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.” (Matthew 11:4-6, NIV) Jesus claimed that these miracles were his testimony. The blind, lame, lepers, deaf, and even the deceased were healed.

Those are the five miracles we will cover in this series. Today we look at a story of Jesus healing a blind man.

You may not be physically blind, but who has experienced “selective temporary blindness”? Have you ever stood in front of an open refrigerator and asked, “Honey, where’s the butter?” I know what my wife tells me. (*Pause for someone to say it*) “It’s right there in the fridge.” So you look again. It’s just not there. You exclaim, “I can’t find it!” And then what happens? She stomps over to the fridge, reaches behind the orange juice, and like magic, pulls out 15 pounds of butter. And then, what does she say? (*pause again*) “See, I told you. Right there.”

When I was a freshman in high school, I encountered a blind man in our youth group. We were traveling on a party bus, going from house to house and picking up food and members of our youth group along the way, and I found myself sitting in the front seat next to this guy, about 18 years old, who was literally blind. And as the evening progressed, I found myself translating for him everything that I was seeing. “Whose house are we at now?” he would ask. “What are they doing?” “Where are we going next?” “Who just said that?” I realized that he experienced something totally different than what I did, even though we were at the same party.

Do me a favor for a moment. Cover your eyes with both hands. Shut out all the light. Pretend you are completely blind. Hold your hands there as I reread the first part of the scripture. Try to experience this story from the perspective of the blind man.

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. *(Make the sound of spitting)*. Go, wash in the Pool of Sent.”

Now open your eyes again. What did you notice? *(Allow for two answers. See if anyone noticed how the disciples were rude to the blind man, or Jesus’ reference to light.)*

The first thing you may have heard was the disciples’ question. It was hardly worded in a politically correct fashion, but it did illustrate a common teaching: being born blind was a punishment. The question was, “Whose fault is it?” Exodus 20:5 says that God punishes the children and grandchildren of sinners. However, Ezekiel 18:20 says the sinner dies, not his or her children or parents.

“Whose fault is it?” We ask this a lot today. We live in a world that demands answers, that wants everything to fit into nice, neat packages with no messy ends. We would rather focus on the blame than on the solution. But does it occur to us, beyond the blame or the solution, there might be an even greater purpose? Maybe it is NOBODY’S fault. Instead we might remember the words of Romans 8:28. “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” That purpose is to bring God glory. That’s a different perspective. That’s a totally different focus. To look for Jesus in all things, not blame.

Friends, I have news for you. Miracles are messy, and Jesus likes messy. He is not bound to our finite thinking, and there is no challenge, no problem, no

situation that he cannot work through to glorify himself, if we will trust him. That is a promise not from me, but from the Bible itself. And it takes a lot of guts to believe it. *(PAUSE)*

What would happen if we really acted like we believe that promise? If we believed that God can use all parts of our lives, the good, the bad, and the ugly, for God's glory, not our own? Would our lives look more like this man born blind? Would our response match his?

Allow me to paraphrase the end of this story. After the healing, the blind man went before the Pharisees, the Jewish leaders who were supposed to keep everything neat and tidy in the Jewish life. First of all, they couldn't make sense of the miracle. In their minds, it just shouldn't have happened. If the Jewish leaders had a refrigerator, they would have opened the door expecting butter, and instead found the most beautiful and delicious wedding cake they had ever seen. And they'd still be mad that they couldn't find the butter! One group said, "Well, Jesus can't be from God; he broke the Sabbath by working." Another group said, "Not from God? And yet he accomplished a miracle?" There just was no neat box to put this in. It was very irritating to them.

Next, they brought in the blind man's parents. Was he really blind in the first place? "Yes," his parents said, "he was blind. But we're not going to tell you anything else...he's old enough." His parents were afraid of persecution, so they deflected the question back to their son.

The tension built up to a critical moment. It says in verse 24, "A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. 'Give glory to God,' they said. 'We know this man (i.e. Jesus) is a sinner.'"

The blind man's response has echoed throughout history. What did he say? Did he pull out his Bible and concordance, translate the Hebrew, write a 9-page sermon, and throw in references to Socrates and Plato and convince the whole crowd to follow Jesus?

NO! He simply said (verse 25), "I don't know anything about Jesus, except that I was blind, and now I see." Sounds like a song, doesn't it? "I once was lost, but now am found. Was blind, but now I see." *(pause)*

The thing is, we often think, if we cannot put our testimony into nice neat packages, it is not worth telling. But, friends, this blind man teaches us, what makes our story important is that it is OUR story. Your story. Mine. You are the miracle!

Do you know who wrote that beautiful song, Amazing Grace? John Newton, a slave trader who became a priest. Jesus opened John Newton's eyes to spiritual blindness and injustice, and changed his life, and we have been singing about that miracle for over a hundred years.

Friends, you have a story this morning. You have a testimony. You are a miracle! There is something in your life that God has done, that will blow everyone's socks off. You don't have to wait for the right education, the right theology, or the right words. It's all in your unique experience.

Just look at this blind man, this uneducated beggar, who was dependent on everyone around him to tell him what was happening, to bring him any information at all about his world, whose own parents wouldn't even defend him. This man went head-to-head with the highly educated, Torah-memorizing, law-expounding, "if-you-have-a-question-we-have-the-answer" Pharisees. And who won the argument? Who do you think? *(wait)* I think the blind man did.

Listen to the rest of the story. (verse 26) “Then they asked him, ‘What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?’ He 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?’”

(verse 28) “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.’”

How ironic. These men were supposed to know everything. And they claimed to know Jesus was a sinner, and claimed not to know anything about him.

The blind man threw it back in their faces. (verse 30) “Now, that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes....If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

For his honesty and courage, they kicked him out of the community. (verse 34) They shouted, “How dare you lecture us!” These “experts” were completely wrong. Jesus even said that they were the ones who were really blind. *(long pause, next part is softer tone.)*

It is easy to point the finger at the Pharisees, but the truth is, I have been blind, too. I have missed miracles. I have overlooked what God has done in my life and called it coincidence. I have resisted what others have told me. Their experience did not fit my definition. And I have felt shame when I realized I was wrong. Has anyone else been there? *(pause, then louder and more upbeat)*

There is great news, though. With one question, Jesus turned this man’s life around. It is right there in verse 35. Jesus asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” In other words, do you believe that God sent his one and only son into the world, to save the world, to give us hope and forgiveness, to die on a

cross to show us that not even death could stop his love? Do you believe in the Messiah, the one who saves? Do you? *(pause)*

The blind man's answer to that one question astounds me. Remember, he had the courage to face the Pharisees. He knew Jesus had healed him. But his answer was not simply, "Yes." He said, (verse 36) "Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him." *(pause)*

The man whom Jesus healed admitted, he did not know who Christ was! He did not have it all together! And Jesus did not admonish him, criticize him, or tell him, "You dork, the butter is right there in front of you." No. Jesus simply said, "You are looking at him and talking to him, right now, right here in front of you." (verse 37, paraphrased)

That is the heart of the matter. Do you look for Jesus in your life? Do you even want to see Jesus? Can you open your eyes to see God working in your most dire circumstances? Do you believe that Jesus is your greatest hope, that he defeats blindness and even death? Do you believe in miracles?

If you have experienced the reality of God, you have a witness. It is that simple. It does not matter how profound you think your story is. The fact remains, we have encountered the SON OF GOD. And we need to talk about him.

I challenge you today, do not be blind to Christ. Do not be blind to what he has done in your life. Remember, this man did not even know where or who Jesus was. He did not have all the answers. But he knew what Jesus had done for him.

I would like you to take a moment this morning and reflect on two things. First, what has Jesus done for you? *(pause)* Second, whom have you told? *(pause)* When you pray this week, ask God to show you those two things. If you have

never invited Jesus into your life, to remove your spiritual blindness, to open your heart to receive him, would you do it now? Would you let this community of faith receive you and work with you and serve with you and show you what God can do for God's glory? Would you be a part of the eye-opening miracles God is doing in Bellaire? I pray that answer is "Yes."

May you see Jesus before you, and may you respond as the blind man did. "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him." And then may you go and be a witness to the reality of God's miracles.