

Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live
(The Gospel of John: Signs of the Messiah - 1:1-12:50)
John 9:13-41
A Blind Man's Testimony: Part Two

Nothing is more destructive than persistent unbelief. Have you ever shared an important life experience with someone who responded with the words “I don’t believe that!” At that moment they were both denying the validity of your story and impugning your character. They were in effect calling you a liar or worse than that - delusional. This is precisely what is happening to the blind man in John chapter 9. You would’ve thought that Jesus’ amazing miracle of healing a man who had been blind from birth would’ve been enough to have at least softened the hard hearts of the Pharisees. But no, they continued on in their stubborn unbelief. This blatant rejection of Jesus as the Light of the world would ultimately result in their condemnation and judgment. Indeed this passage gives us four characteristics of willful persistent unbelief:

I. Unbelief Is Divisive (John 9:13-16).

¹³ *They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.*

¹⁴ *Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.* ¹⁵ *So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”*

¹⁶ *Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.*

How does it divide?

1. Unbelief divides by clouding the truth of Scripture with man-made traditions and interpretations. Jesus has just healed a man on the Sabbath. This is one of seven Sabbath healings. In response, his neighbors bring him to the Pharisees to get their opinion of what had happened to him. Most probably they wanted to see how their leaders would react to this blatant violation of the Sabbath day restrictions.

According to the Pharisees, Jesus would have broken at least three “Sabbath laws.” Healing could only be performed in a life or death situation and so Jesus should’ve waited till the following day. Second,

Jesus had “kneaded the clay” with his saliva to make mud and kneading (dough, and by analogy, clay) was included among 39 classes of work forbidden on the Sabbath. Third, some rabbis taught that it was not permitted to anoint the eyes with saliva (which was considered to have medicinal qualities) on the Sabbath. It becomes almost immediately obvious that there is a division between those who would hold to the teachings of Scripture alone and those, like the Pharisees, who would pile on extra-biblical restrictions which went far beyond the Law.

2. Unbelief divides those who reject Christ from those who receive him. Immediately we see a division between those who see Jesus as a Sabbath breaker and therefore could not have come from God who created and ordained the Sabbath, and those who see Jesus as a miracle worker and therefore must have come from God. Jesus was either a common sinner or someone very special.

3. Unbelief divides those who are hypocrites from those who are genuine. What Jesus will repeatedly reveal concerning the so-called “righteous” Pharisees is that while they prided themselves in keeping the minutia of their legalistic Sabbath rules, they ignored the very spirit of the law. How? They refused to show mercy by afflicting the people with burdensome rules too heavy for them to bear. And they corrupted the Sabbath, turning it into a day of self glorification instead of a day of glorifying God. They, the doctors of the church, professed to have a faith they did not possess. The blind man will later demonstrate a simple, genuine, authentic faith.

II. Unbelief Is Irrational (John 9:17-30)

¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” ¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰ His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹ But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²² (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess

Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.)²³ Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.”²⁵ He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”²⁶ They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”²⁷ He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?”²⁸ And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.”²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”³⁰ The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.

1. The irrationality of denying the truth that is staring you in the face. One of the amazing things about unbelief is that people choose to disbelieve even when irrefutable proof or insurmountable evidence is standing there right in front of them. O how deep and dark is the blindness of unbelief. The whole town has just seen a man that they have known for decades to be blind, receive his sight, and yet some are so blinded by unbelief that they believe this to be a case of mistaken identity. And when the blind man’s parents dismantle this argument, they still refuse to believe.

In the second interrogation the blind man literally sets the Pharisees on their heels. Indeed, they make it clear that they do not believe that Jesus is God by attempting to force the man to modify his testimony. The expression “give glory to God” is illuminated by Joshua 7:19 where Achan is similarly challenged (He had just stolen and hidden the loot of battle in his tent.). Joshua knowingly says “My son, give glory to the Lord...Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me.” What the Pharisees are asking is that the blind man gives God glory by telling the truth instead of continuing to promote his lie. They are absolutely convinced that Jesus is an imposter claiming to be God when in fact he is the vilest of sinners.

The blind man responds by asking why he should retell the story of his miracle when they are obviously biased against the truth and will not

believe him anyway. Now the blind man is at first respectful, conceding that he is not a theological heavyweight so he cannot speculate on whether Jesus is a sinner or not. By that he meant, he could not confirm or deny whether Jesus had broken the oral traditions or the Mosaic Law. Then he gets “put out” by their continual attacks on his story and is clearly sarcastic when he says, *“I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?”*

The Pharisees react to this biting sarcasm by exploding in rage against the man’s mockery of them. How could this uneducated beggar challenge them. How could he question the righteousness of those who were authorities and immaculate in their keeping of the oral traditions and the law of the greatest prophet, Moses? How could he instead follow this deranged, uneducated, and unrestrained blasphemer, Jesus? Moses was a proven quantity but Jesus was an unproven Galilean upstart.

2. The irrationality of denying the truth compelling you to persecute those who do believe. In the face of overwhelming confirmation that a miracle has been performed, and that Jesus can do only what God can do - heal all diseases, his parents cannot even answer fully the Pharisees’ questions. They are predictably evasive and tell the Pharisees to ask their son because he is legally old enough to speak for himself. Why? It is clear that they fear some form of excommunication from their synagogue and therefore severe social ostracism from their community. They will kick us out of the church and the community!

The Jews had three types of excommunication: one would last 30 days and during that time the person could not come within 6 feet of anyone else. Another one was for an indefinite period of time during which the person was excluded from all fellowship and worship. And the most grievous one was absolute expulsion forever from the community. This final one would be in effect, a death sentence! So great was the Pharisee’s hatred for the truth and for the One who is the truth that they would use any means to stamp it out.

III. Unbelief Is Insolent (John 9:31-34)

³¹ *We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.* ³² *Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.* ³³ *If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”*

³⁴ *They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.*

It is certainly ironic that this uneducated blind man is now given ability by God to speak humbling words to those who seem to feel that they were beyond the need to learn, or at least far superior in human intellect and theological understanding. In effect, he says to them that they are looking past the elephant in the room. The proof that Jesus was from God was made obvious by his ability to perform such a powerful and constructive miracle - to heal congenital blindness and to give a man brand-new fully sighted eyes. Indeed, no previous healing of a man born blind had been recorded in Scripture. Jesus had done what apparently no one else had done and therefore could not qualify as the sinner that the Pharisees were making them out to be.

The seething unbelief of the Pharisees prompted a harsh, rude, insolent reply. Their words dripping with scorn and sarcasm, they attempt the ultimate put down by saying that he has been guilty of gross iniquity. How could a depraved sinner like himself, steeped in sin from the time he was born, challenge these “godly” men? It reminds me of the saying that when you don’t have an argument pound harder and speak louder. Ironically, by alleging the man had indeed been blind from birth, given the absolute connections that they found between sin and suffering, the Pharisees now tacitly acknowledge that the man had indeed been blind from birth and consequently his story was authentic. They have in reality affirmed what they denied.

IV. Unbelief Condemns Forever (John 9:39-41)

³⁹ *Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”* ⁴⁰ *Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?”* ⁴¹ *Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.*

Jesus's primary purpose in coming into the world is to save some, but in doing so he has to pass judgment on others. Now this judgment is the result of his coming, not the reason for it. His coming inevitably involves exposing the spiritual blindness of some, so they might recognize their blindness, turn to Jesus in faith, and "see." Conversely, his coming would also involve confirming the spiritual blindness of those who profess to see spiritually, but really do not because of their unbelief. Jesus is truly the pivot on which all human destiny turns. Here Jesus explains that what had happened to this man and the Pharisees was an example of what his whole ministry was about. You cannot come to Christ without surrendering your personal pride (in this case one's religious opinions) You cannot come without a candid acknowledgment that you are spiritually blind and need God's healing touch in order to see. Jesus came to bring peace, but to reject his peace is to receive his judgment. He came to bring grace, but to reject his grace is to receive his justice. He came to bring mercy, but to reject his mercy is to receive his wrath.

Jesus makes it clear that if the Pharisees would confess that they were spiritually blind and admit their need for Christ, the true Light of the world, they would have no sin because it would be washed away by his blood and forever forgiven. But in their stubborn refusal and their habitual unbelief they had doomed themselves to living in the darkness of sin and ultimately the darkness of eternal punishment forever. They who consider themselves the most enlightened men in the room were in fact the most blind.

Conclusion (John 9:35-38)

³⁵ *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"* ³⁶ *He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"* ³⁷ *Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you."* ³⁸ *He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.*

What is really comforting about this passage is that this miracle is a wonderful story in which Jesus opens the eyes of one who is spiritually blind so that he can receive complete sight and through simple authentic faith passes from darkness to light. We see the faith of this man grow

from a seed till it blossoms and deepens into one who becomes a follower of Christ. At first the blind man knew only that the one who healed him was named Jesus (9:11). Next, he concluded that Jesus must be “a prophet” like unto Elijah and Elisha - that he is clearly one Sent from God (9:18, 33). And finally he will bow and worship Jesus as Lord (9:38). All along the way Jesus responds to the blind man’s faith by enlarging it and giving him further revelation so that it might come to full saving faith. He goes all the way from believing that Jesus was a good man to the fact that Jesus was God - the God-man!

Does he not do that to us who believe? All across this world, every single day, Jesus reveals himself through the Scriptures, through the testimony of a believer, through the wonder of the design and power in his creation. And at some point we come face-to-face with the most important question that will ever be asked of us. Who do you say that I am? In other words, who do you believe Jesus to be? Your answer to that question will determine your final destiny. If you believe that he was only a great man or a good teacher; if you refuse to believe that he was God and that he came to be *your* light and *your* life in a dark and dying world; if you refuse to trust in him alone to save you and to follow him alone as your new Lord and master, you will die in your sins. But if you will simply believe that he has lived the perfect life you could not live, died a fully satisfying death that you could not die, and receive him as your Lord and Savior, then a miracle, as dramatic and life-changing as a blind man receiving sight, will occur in your life. You will forever pass from groping about in the darkness to the clarity and vibrancy of living and walking in the light. You will begin to see, although dimly, the glory of the light of the heaven and new earth that awaits you. You will discover that all along you were prepared and made for another world. Are you willing to believe? If you have received sight, are you bringing the light to others in our darkening world. What an incredible opportunity! Jesus is sending you to the community right where you live. And he may open the door to the world beyond your front door. The Light of the World is looking for lights in the world. Will you be that light?