

# Open Your Eyes

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Preacher: Warwick Grant

[ 0 : 0 0 ] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 30th of January 2000. The preacher is Warwick Grant.

His sermon is entitled, Open Your Eyes, and is from John, chapter 9, verses 1 to 41. Amen. Well, if you want to follow the passage with me, it can be found on page 871 in the Bibles in the seats just in front of you.

Page 871. And we're at the very start of chapter 9. And I'll read the first couple of verses. As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Well, what Peter said on the video was right.

The belief or a common belief in Jewish culture was that suffering was a result of some sin. So if something bad happened to you, quite specifically, you must have done something wrong.

[ 1 : 5 5 ] If you suffered, well, you were getting paid back in some way. Or maybe your parents had done something wrong. So Jesus' disciples asked him this question in verse 2.

Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? And as Peter said, they used to even think the fetus could sin in the womb. I don't know what they could do. I mean, kick the mother too hard or something like that.

That's what the theory was. Jesus answers the disciples' question with the words recorded for us in verse 3. Neither this man nor his parents sinned.

He was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. Jesus goes on. Now, Jesus is speaking here of his life on earth before his passion, his death on the cross and his resurrection.

He knew that this painful death on this cross was ahead of him. He knew that this was why God had brought him into the world to die for us. He knew he had a job to do given to him by his father.

[ 3 : 1 4 ] And he and his followers had to continue doing what they knew God had given them to do before the time that Jesus would die would happen. Well, Jesus now proceeds to heal this guy.

Read verse 6 and 7. When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which means sent.

Then he went and washed and came back able to see. You might find it repulsive, the idea of putting saliva on this guy's eyes and making a muddy paste out of it still.

Saliva did have a reputation of having healing qualities. And when Jesus healed another blind guy, as recorded in Mark's Gospel, chapter 10, he healed him quite differently.

He just said to the guy, Go, your faith has made you well. No saliva, no muddy paste. So you might be wondering, well, why did Jesus heal one blind guy that way and another blind guy this way?

- [ 4 : 19 ] Well, I don't know. I wonder in this story if he was wanting to give this guy a chance to actually express some faith in him. He said, Well, look, I'll put this stuff on your eyes.
- You go to the pool of Siloam and wash it off. Now, if the guy thought Jesus wasn't true, he would have just wiped it off and said, Don't be stupid. But the guy, he did what Jesus said.
- He said, Okay, this is strange, but I will obey you. And his faith was true to Jesus and he was healed when he washed his eyes in the pool of Siloam.
- It's a bit like that for us too sometimes, isn't it? Sometimes we know things that Jesus expects us to do. And even though it might seem strange, against the ways of the world perhaps, we know we should have faith in him and do it.
- Sometimes professional people who work in Australia and have a very, very good healthy salary are called by Jesus to missionary service in a third world country.
- [ 5 : 20 ] It's against all common sense to just give up those good jobs, well-paid jobs, and to go overseas to earn not very much money. But sometimes God calls us to faith like that.
- And there are even people in our own congregation that have had to make decisions like that. I wonder if there's something in your life, in my life, where God is actually asking us to do something.
- And strange it may seem, we know we need to be faithful to him and obey him. Well, let's go back to our story. And if you read verses 8 to 10, you'll see that some of the neighbours of this guy refused to believe what had happened to him, thinking that this guy who could see was just looking like the guy that was blind, the blind beggar that they used to know.
- Verses 10 and 11, the guy actually describes how he was healed. Now, you've got to admit that this whole incident is pretty amazing.
- To heal someone who has been blind since birth is a pretty astonishing thing. And we're just trying to grapple, hang on, I just can't get my brain around what has happened to this guy. They would have seen him day after day, week after week, year after year, begging.
- [ 6 : 34 ] That's all he could do. And all of a sudden, this whole framework has changed. He can see. Now, the Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day.
- And so, the people often went to them to seek a comment from them. And they went to the Pharisees and told them what had happened. I don't think that they were trying to get Jesus into trouble by going to the Pharisees and dobbing Jesus in because he did something on the Sabbath.
- I don't think it's like that. But they just wanted a comment from them on this incident. It's a bit like when they might interview our Archbishop on TV about some current ethical issue.
- Let's want to get his opinion. Let's get the Pharisees' opinion about this incredible event. Well, verse 14 tells us, as I mentioned, that it was the Jewish Sabbath when Jesus performed this act of healing.
- Now, this is the same as our Saturday. Saturday was the Jewish people's special holy day, set aside to rest. And on the Sabbath, all kinds of work were not permitted. And they worked out all these really petty rules, not from the Bible, but the scribes and their tradition had worked out that you couldn't do this and this and this and this.
- [ 7 : 42 ] All sorts of little things. I was even reading that you couldn't even walk around with sandals that were fastened together with nails because the nails constituted a burden and you weren't allowed to carry a burden on the Sabbath.
- Just nonsensical stuff like that. Healing was not permitted on the Sabbath unless the person's life was in danger.
- What a nice concession that was. Isn't that good? Even the act of Jesus mixing his saliva with mud was work. Naughty, naughty, naughty. A breach of the Sabbath regulations.

Now, Jesus hadn't disobeyed the Old Testament scripture. Just the silly traditional regulations, these regulations that the pharisaical and scribal tradition, which I don't understand a lot of, but it had been a man-made set of rules that Jesus had disobeyed, not God's regulations.

Well, in verse 16, the conclusion of some of the Pharisees was that Jesus was a sinner because of this infringement of the Sabbath regulations.

[ 8 : 53 ] Others said, as we read in the second half of verse 16, how can a man who is a sinner form such signs? And some of them had quite a high regard for Jesus.

Well, an interesting move was in verse 17. They actually got to this guy and said, what do you think of him? What's your opinion of him? Now, I don't know whether this chap was educated or not, but he said the greatest title, I think, that he could think of.

He said, he's a prophet. He is a prophet. I just want to press the pause button on this story of John chapter 9 just for a second just to point out a couple of things.

Now, this whole gospel of John, it's an obvious thing, it was written by John, Jesus' best friend, the closest of the 12 disciples to Jesus. And chapter 9 of this gospel is the story of the man born blind and it's wonderful to see Jesus bringing healing to those who had faith in him.

There's another message running through the thread of this story. It's a great story, a true story of a man who was healed of blindness since birth.

[ 10 : 10 ] It's wonderful, it shows the power that Jesus has healed. He heals the man of physical blindness but he's also teaching us about spiritual blindness.

In Jesus' day and today there were and are people who can't see that Jesus is the Messiah, the one who God has sent to save the world from sin and death.

These people suffer from spiritual blindness, if you like. they can't recognize Jesus for who he really is. God's son, the only saviour of the world, the only way to have a relationship with God.

So as we look at the rest of the story, just want all of us to think about who is really the blind people, who are really the blind people in this story, who are the people in the story suffering from spiritual blindness.

let's go on to verse 18. I'll just read a few verses from 18 onwards. 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 and asked them, is this your son who you say was born blind?

[ 11 : 25 ] How then does he now see? His parents answered, we know that he is our son and that he was born blind but we do not know how it is that he now sees nor do we know who opened his eyes.

Ask him, he is of age, he will speak for himself. His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

Therefore his parents said, he is of age, ask him. The parents of this guy acknowledged that yes, it was indeed their son and he had been healed but they weren't going to buy into any discussion about how this had happened.

If they had acknowledged in any way at all that Jesus had been part of this wonderful deed, they risked excommunication from the synagogue. A very serious penalty being shut out from the religious life of the Jewish people and it would have had consequences socially as well.

This is something they didn't want to risk. Maybe they should have but they didn't. So the Pharisees dragged the hill man up again in verse 24.

- [ 12 : 45 ] So for the second time they called the man who'd been blind and they said to him, give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner. When the Pharisees say, give glory to God, it's really emotional manipulation.
- What they're sort of saying is, before God, own up and admit the truth. We know the sort of truth that they want this guy to admit, don't we?
- They've already judged, sentenced, Jesus before any discussion has taken place. They've made up their mind about Jesus before they've even heard about what's happened. Their Jesus is a sinner and a breaker of their petty laws.
- They weren't open to the real truth about Jesus and as I hinted at with the question before, they are the real blind people of this story. This blind guy ended up having his sight restored but he also had his spiritual blindness, if he had suffered from it, removed as well.
- The Pharisees are the truly blind people in this incident. And friends, there are people all around us today who are like the Pharisees.
- [ 14 : 00 ] Their mind is closed to the truth of Jesus, that he is God's son, the saviour of the world. The world is full of this type of blind person. They don't use a white cane, they don't have a guide dog, they're spiritually blind.
- They're not guided by Jesus, the one who is the way, the truth and the life. It's a blunt thing to say, but they're on a direct route to an eternity without God.
- I don't like talking about hell. I don't think it's pleasant. I don't like the idea of people I love rejecting Jesus and spending an eternity without him. But spiritually blind people are on a highway to hell.
- And I don't mean that to sound emotional and sensationalist. it's a spiritual reality if they continue to avoid accepting God. What about your own friends and your family members, and I have them too, who are spiritually blind?
- It's a bleak future that is awaiting them. What can we do about it? Do we have the smug attitude? Do we just sit around smugly and say, well, I'm not spiritually blind.
- [ 15 : 11 ] I know Jesus, and I know he forgives me and loves me, and I'll be with him in heaven forever. But those twerps, those friends of mine, well, they don't believe in Jesus. I'm so much better than them.
- Is that our attitude? Or do we have sincere love and devotion and care for them? Do we pray regularly, earnestly, daily perhaps, for our non-Christian friends, that they would be cured of their spiritual blindness and come to see Jesus as the best friend they could ever have?
- I was spiritually blind once until I was about 21. I am so glad that I now see Jesus for who he is, the saviour of the world. That's the most important prayer we can ever pray for anyone, that they would be healed of their spiritual blindness.
- There's lots of prayers we can pray and there'll be a time of prayer later in the service. We can pray for an end to the war in Chechnya, for an end to the famine in the world, for peace between nations, for an end of the world.
- And while all these things are important, the most important thing we can pray is for people to be healed of spiritual blindness. Because if people come to know Jesus as their best friend, their saviour, their lord, they will begin to live truly Christian lives.
- [ 16 : 37 ] Now I know the world's problems won't be completely solved this side of heaven. Christians sin and do wrong stuff, and I know I do, stacks of it. But as people come to know Christ as their saviour and lord and seek to follow him, God's peace will begin to reign in our world.

His kingdom will come into our world slowly but surely. It won't come completely until Jesus returns, but his kingdom will make advances.

So keep praying for your friends who don't know Jesus. Don't give up. I heard of a lady who witnessed the baptism of a brother who she had been praying for for 20 years.

And at the baptism she was sobbing with tears and someone came up to her and said, why are you so upset? I thought you'd be happy that your brother has come to faith in Jesus. And she said, well I am happy about that but I'm crying because there were so many times I just about gave up and stop praying.

Don't give up. Even for years you may have to pray for some people. Well let's finish our examination of the story. In verse 25 to 27 the man responds to their second barrage of questions and implies that he has become one of Jesus' disciples.

[ 17 : 58 ] In verse 30 the hill man attempts to point out to the Pharisees that Jesus must be from God but they were just unwilling to learn and accuse him of sinfulness. Well the man is expelled from the temple and it's ironic isn't it that he expelled from God's temple and it's the God of that temple who just healed him and yet he'd been expelled from it.

Well the next seven verses of the story are the concluding ones. I'll read verse 35 and 6. Jesus heard that they had driven him out and when he found him he said do you believe in the son of man?

He answered and who is he sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him. Now son of man was one of the titles given to Jesus. Well we know the story verse 37 and 38 Jesus revealed himself to this man and he in turn worships Jesus as God.

He says in verse 38 Lord I believe. It's interesting to see how the man's faith progressed as the chapter moves through. He initially referred to the man in verse 11 as the man called Jesus.

Then he calls him a prophet. Then he talks about being one of his disciples. Now he calls him Lord. The master of his life. What do we make of Jesus' words in verse 39?

[ 19 : 30 ] Let me read it. Jesus is speaking. He says I came into this world for judgment that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.

The fact of the matter is Jesus wants everyone to know his love. God has no pleasure in someone rejecting him and going to be in an eternity without him.

That doesn't give God any joy at all. God wants all to turn to him and to live the Bible tells us. But Jesus wants salvation for everyone who will believe in him and are open to accepting the truth about him.

But there are others who in rejecting Jesus have the disease if you like of spiritual blindness. And the whole incident the whole chapter concludes with Jesus pointing out to some of these Pharisees that because they claim to see they're actually guilty of sin because they're actually spiritually blind.

So let's remember to pray for those who we know who are spiritually blind that God might open their eyes to see him truly and pray that we ourselves may never suffer from that blindness, that spiritual blindness as we seek to walk with God.

[ 20 : 53 ] So we wouldn't be blind to the needs of people in the world, our need to love others and share God's love with them. Well as I finish let me just say that there was a guy, a famous person who did suffer from spiritual blindness a couple of centuries ago.

His name was John Newton. He was a slave trader and he sold people as slaves. He admits himself he was spiritually blind.

But God rescued John Newton from spiritual blindness and made him see his need of Jesus. He became a Christian and accepted God's forgiveness for himself.

He stopped trading in slaves and his life changed for the better. He wrote about his experience in the words of the famous hymn Amazing Grace.

And we're going to sing that hymn now and it's number 28 in the blue hymn books. And the waterodzi have a devant.