

Searching For God's Third Option

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[0 : 00] Amen. Aren't you glad Jesus loves you today? Wow. That really sounded convincing. Aren't y'all glad Jesus loves you today? Aren't you glad He's your Savior? Your sins have been forgiven and you have an eternal heavenly home waiting? Isn't that something to get excited about? You know people have beliefs all over the world. They believe in the wrong things and yet we are so privileged here to know that Jesus loves us and we have the Word of God and if that's not worth getting excited about and worth shouting about, I don't know. And when we come here on Sundays it's a time for us as the body of Christ to worship Him. You know I've said this in my Sunday school class many times that no matter what's going on in our lives, the bad things that happen, if we hold on to the truth that Jesus has set us free, He's forgiven us of our sin, you know we can get through anything can't we?

Because we have truth. Not only did He die for us but He made sure we had a copy of His Word in our language that we could certainly understand. I thank all the musicians this morning. We are so talented here. We have so many individuals that help us each and every week. I thank Brian for working on that, putting that together. There's nothing that ushers us into the presence of the Lord like music, is there? God created us that way and He created us to be able to enter into His very presence that we could then study His Word and understand His truth and the way He would have us to live. And today we're going to be in John chapter 9. John chapter 9 and we're going to be looking at verses 1 through 25, searching for God's third option. You know in our passage today we encounter a blind man. He's been blind since birth. He's been living in a world of complete and total darkness and he cannot even begin to comprehend, you know, what it would be like to see or to have sight and how that would change his life. When I was in college, I had a friend that was born blind. You know, and if you and I close our eyes today and I say, picture the color red, you can do that, can't you? Or if I say, picture the color green, you can imagine what that is. But to someone who's been born blind, I ask my friend, can you even begin to imagine what the color red is? I said, no. You can't even visualize that or imagine that at all?

I said, no. The only thing he's ever seen in his entire life is darkness, black. And that's the only color he knows. And that's the man in our story today that we encounter. He was born blind. And as a result, he was a beggar his entire life. He had to sit outside and depend upon other people's charity to provide for him and to, you know, provide for the needs that he would have just for food and maybe shelter and clothing. And Jesus comes along in this man's life and he not only heals his physical blindness, but he also heals his spiritual blindness and he begins to help him to see spiritually that Jesus is the Messiah and for him to come to understand and know God and who God is and his will for his life. So let's look at our scriptures together today. We're going to break this into two sections and I'm just going to read the first seven verses to begin with and then we'll read the rest of this passage in a moment. So John chapter nine, verses one through seven.

As he went 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? Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus, 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. Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes. Go, he told him, wash in the pool of Shalom. This word means sent. So the man went and washed and came home seeing. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Jesus, we do thank you that you love us.

We thank you, Lord, for those that have surrendered our lives to you, that you've forgiven us and washed our sins away and that we can have a relationship with you. And we pray today, thanking you for the word of God, that you would speak through your word. We know that your word is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword. And we pray, Lord, today that you speak to our hearts, each one of us, maybe in different places, different struggles, different opportunities of life, that you speak where we are and lead us and draw us closer to you. In Jesus' name we pray, Father. Amen.

[5 : 41] To make this passage real to us this morning and for this passage to truly come to life and to be more than just a story that we've probably heard all of our lives, I want you to fill the blank in on a question. You'll see it up on the screen. I would love to be able to see God do blank in my life.

I would love to see God do blank. What is it that you're sitting here today that you would love to see God do in your life? You know, maybe you're struggling in faith today. You'd like to believe the claims of Christ. You'd like to surrender your life to Him. You'd like to be in that intimate relationship with Him. But there's just some struggles that you can't overcome. And maybe you would like for God to give you faith today to be able to believe those things as a child. Or maybe you are a believer today, but you're having struggles with a particular sin in your life or struggles in growing in your relationship.

And you would like God to work in your life in a way to overcome those things. Maybe you're struggling with a physical illness or something that God could bring healing in your life. Or maybe today, you have a loved one that is lost. And you've been praying for that loved one for a very long time.

And yet up to this point, they have still yet to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. But you so desperately desire for God to work and bring that loved one to the Lord. Well, go ahead and fill that blank in today.

I would love to be able to see God do blank in my life. Because when we fill that blank in, it changes the dynamics of this scripture passage. It changes the whole way we look upon this passage.

[7 : 40] And it really brings it to life for us. And it makes it really more personal and more real. And as we begin to look at this passage today, I want to bring out a couple of truths, three truths from this passage. I always read the scripture to look for ways to apply it to life. You know, I don't see that we should read scripture just for the sake of knowledge. Or read scripture just to say we know the story. But if we're not taking the scripture and actually applying it to our lives, then we're missing the point of the scripture altogether. The scripture is here for us to know God, but also to understand his will for our lives and how he desires for us to live. Jesus said in John 10, John 10, 10, I have come to give you life and to give you life more abundantly. You know, as a Christian, it's not about restrictions. It's not about rules and regulations and just stomping the joy out of life. It's about joy. It's about peace. It's about love. And it's about having that abundant life. And so when we read this passage today in John chapter nine, there's three truths that I want us to look at today. There's probably others here that you'll see and that God can speak to you in your heart. But today I want us to look at three of those truths in particular.

And the first of those is that we can break through either or thinking in our lives. Let me explain. In verse two, the disciples came up to Jesus and they said, Rabbi, whose sin is it that this man is born blind? Was it his sin or was it his parent's sin? They were asking either it was the man's sin or it was the parent's sin. Now there's a big problem theologically with either one of those options.

But in that day and time, the people believe that all sin was a result. I mean, excuse me, all sickness was a result of sin. If they had sickness or disease or problems in their life, it was God's judgment upon them. When you go back to the book of Job, then you understand why his friends kept insisting you had to have done something wrong. You had to have sinned against God because they believed that sickness, disease, tragedy, things like that were God's judgment upon them. And so the disciples were really trapped here in kind of a bad alternative of this man's condition. And really, they're thinking, put this man in a really hopeless situation. But Jesus wanted them to understand. He wanted to broaden their understanding as he often did throughout the scriptures, that he would take their understanding and he would correct it or he would broaden it to a whole new scope. And he wanted them to see and understand that it wasn't this man's sin, nor was it his parents' sin. But what does he say here is the reason why this man was born blind. Look with me at verse 3. Neither this man nor his parents' sin, said Jesus. Now, the next part of this verse can be a little bit shocking to us.

This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. You mean to tell me this man has been blind his entire life? And imagine the struggles. Imagine the pain. Imagine the hardship he's endured. He's had to beg for people to give him money so that he could barely survive and get, you know, through life. You mean to tell me that that has happened to him entirely, Jesus said, so that the work of the Lord might be displayed. So that God's name would be glorified and honored through this man. Wow. That's a totally and entirely different way of thinking. And it may be that it's an entirely different way of thinking in our lives today.

that my struggles, my physical limitations could actually be brought about in my life by the hand of God so that his name might be glorified, that his name might be honored, that we could see the work of God that God displayed within us. You know, the disciples were trapped into thinking this either or thinking.

[12 : 44] You know, either this man sinned or his parents sinned. Those were the only two options in their mind that they could see. It never dawned on them that God was going to use this man's blindness so that the work of God could be displayed and actually bring glory and honor to the Father.

You know, sometimes we fall into that same way of thinking. We fall into that trap of either or thinking. Let me give you some examples of this. Sometimes we fall into that way of thinking that either I have to get a divorce.

And by the way, this is not a real personal example. I either have to get a divorce or I have to live in a miserable marriage the rest of my life. Or I have to work this horrible job that I hate or I won't be able to provide for my family.

And we feel trapped and we feel like there's no way out. And there's no solution that gives us hope in life. And so we just grit our teeth and we endure and we bear it and just go on in life.

But what I want us to see today, maybe you are in one of those either or situations in your life. Maybe you feel trapped in between those two not so good options.

[14 : 13] But to begin to look for ways God can work in your life in a way that you couldn't even imagine.

To work in your situation in your life in maybe ways that's never been done before. You know, no one had ever been made to see that had been born blind in these people's life before.

And so we can begin to look for how God can bring glory and honor to His name through us, through our situation, through our lives.

Now, He may not heal us if a physical illness is one of those things. He may not choose to heal us like He did the blind man. But as children of God, could we see God using that physical limitation or that illness still to bring glory to Him?

You know, when we received Christ as our Lord and Savior, we died to self. We no longer live for ourselves, but we live for the Lord.

[15 : 23] So maybe that situation that you find yourself in that is difficult, maybe it takes on all new meaning when we begin to ask God to use that situation or to use those circumstances or to use our lives, our limitations, to bring glory and to bring honor to Him.

And if it brings God glory for me to endure the hardships of life, may His name be praised and may we find great joy in the midst of that situation.

And then that can bring us to the next truth that we see in this scripture. Look with me at verses 6 and 7. Having said this, He spit on the ground.

He made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes. Go, He told him, wash in the pool of shalom. This word means sent. So the man went and washed and came home seeing.

The second truth that we can dig out of this passage today is be ready to take a step of faith. When God directs you, especially if you're praying, asking for God to work or to move or to do something miraculous in your life, you better be ready to follow.

[16 : 43] You better be ready to obey. When He speaks, when He directs, when He answers, follow. Jesus told this man to go and wash his eyes in the pool of shalom.

He spit in the dust, made mud, wiped it on his eyes, and He says, go wash your face. And the man does it and he comes back seeing. Now, that is miraculous.

And the people of that day should be rejoicing. But one of the things that I find interesting or maybe just as miraculous is the fact that this man believed.

He believed Jesus and he obeyed what Jesus told him to do. Now, just imagine, you're blind. You're sitting there. This guy comes along and you've heard that he's healed people and you want him to give you sight.

And he spits in the dust and wipes it on your face and says, go wash your face. I'd be thinking, are you kidding me? Have you lost your mind?

[17 : 48] I've washed my face a million times and it has not helped my blindness. I was born blind. How can mud give me my sight back? This man could have responded that way.

He could have been bitter. He could have said, man, I was hoping for so much more out of Jesus than this. Come on. But what did he do? He obeyed.

He didn't question. He didn't say, are you sure? He didn't argue. He simply took that step of obedience.

What is it that God is leading you to do? What step of faith do you need to take today that God is directing you towards?

And up until this point, you're thinking, are you sure, God? God, are you, do you know what you're really doing? Are you crazy or what? Or we just think, nah, there's no way that could be.

[18 : 49] It's so contrary to what other people think. They'll think I'm nuts. And we hinder ourselves by taking that step of faith. But when we ask God to move, we ask God to work miracles in our lives, we better be ready to respond.

You know, God told the children of Israel, when he led them into the promised land, they encountered one of the most fortified cities of their day. One of the most fortified cities, which was where?

Just seeing if y'all are still with me. Where was it? Joshua fought the battle. Okay, Jericho, thank you. Joshua fought the battle of Jericho.

You know, studies today show that the people's attention span is eight minutes. So pastors have to do something different every eight minutes to keep your attention. So that's why I walk, or I might run up and down the aisle in a minute, but keep you awake, keep you alert, keep you focused.

So, God told Israel to walk around Jericho seven days in a row. And on the seventh day, to walk around it seven times, and then what?

[20 : 04] Blow the trumpets, right? We got a few Sunday school teachers in here. Blow the trumpets. And what happened? The walls came down. Now, was it they're walking around the city that struck fear in the walls, and the walls just crumbled?

Was it the trumpets and the noise of the trumpets just blasted the walls? Was it? No. What was it? It was God.

Because they obeyed. That was the most ridiculous thing you'd ever heard. Anybody? I know we got Boy Scouts and some of you guys that have been through the Citadel, and some of you have been military. Have you ever seen a military strategy written up in books ever that says, just walk around your enemy and blow trumpets?

Is that what we need to do to ISIS today? Just blow some trumpets. They'll run in fear. No. But what was it? It was taking that step of obedience, not asking questions, not arguing, not doubting, but believing and having faith, and then doing what God said to do.

When we are praying for God to work in our lives, and we're asking Him to do the miraculous, we're asking Him ultimately to work in a way that brings glory unto His name.

[21 : 28] Whether He heals us, whether He changes our circumstances, whatever, ultimately we're saying, God, work in me, work in my circumstances, work in my life to bring glory and honor to you.

And then when He answers that by telling you what to do, it's a dangerous thing not to do it. We need to respond immediately in faith.

And that brings us to the third truth here in Scripture, and that's don't be discouraged by others. Look with me, if you will, at verse 8.

And I'm going to read down through verse 25. Here's a man who's been born blind. His whole life he's a beggar. Jesus comes into his life, touches his eyes, and heals him.

You would think the people would celebrate and rejoice. This man has been given sight. But that's not how they respond. Let's look.

[22 : 31] His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg? Some claim that he was. Others said, No, he only looks like him.

But he himself insisted, I am the man. How then were your eyes open, they demanded. And he replied, The man they called Jesus.

He made some mud and he put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Shalom and wash. And so I went and washed, and then I could see. Where is this man, they asked him.

I don't know, he said. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

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. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.

[23 : 36] But others asked, How can a sinner do such miraculous signs? So they were divided. Finally they turned again to the blind man. What have you to say about him?

It was your eyes he opened. And the man replied, He is a prophet. The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

Is this your son, they asked. Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see? We know he's 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's of age. He will speak for himself.

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews. For already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.

[24 : 40] This was why his parents said, He's of age. Ask him. A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. Give glory to God, they said.

We know this man is a sinner. And he replied, Whether this man is a sinner or not, I do not know. But one thing I do know, I was blind.

But now I see. Do you see what happened to this man? You know, all of his life, he's been living in a world of darkness.

And he hears people's voices, and he begins to know people by their voice. And if you ever done that, you get to know a DJ on the radio, or maybe someone you've talked to on the phone, but you've never seen them.

And we always imagine and we picture in our mind what they might look like. And then one day, you see a picture of the individual, and they never look like what you thought, do they?

[25 : 42] Never. They just never look like what you imagine. And that's what happened to this man. He's, for the first time in his life, he's able to see people's faces and match them with voices that he's heard for years and maybe his entire life.

And for the first time, he sees what they look like. But you know what he sees? He sees doubt. He sees individuals that he's known most of his life, people that may have given him money to help him throughout his lifetime.

And now they're doubting that he's even really the blind man. Instead of rejoicing that God has done a miraculous thing, God has given sight to the blind.

Who else could do that but God? And yet they doubt, and they argue, and they drag him before the religious leaders, and they grab the parents, and they're basically wanting to discredit Jesus, saying, No, this man's a sinner.

They see doubt. There are always people in your life that are going to try to cast doubt in your mind.

[26 : 53] There's always going to be people who are negative and try to tear your faith down. When you're praying, asking for God to work and to move in your life, and God is speaking to you, directing you, drawing you close and near, do not let the doubters take your eyes off of Jesus.

Do not let the negative people in your life keep you from taking that step of faith and following where God is directing you to go.

Because there's going to be more doubters and more people in your life that try to tear your faith down than those who build you up. But look for those individuals that will lift you up.

Look for those encouragers in your life and avoid the negative Nellies. Avoid those doubters that want to tear your faith down and stay with the people that uplift you and encourage you and help you to keep your eyes on Christ and even pray for you and strengthen you to take those steps of faith.

Are you caught today in an either-or situation? Are you feeling trapped maybe and even a bit of hopelessness because you're in an either-or situation and you're not sure that you see any positive outcome either way you go?

[28 : 24] Are you willing to go to the Lord and ask for Him for His third option in that situation and to work in a way that you can't even imagine that would bring about glory unto the Father?

And as children of God our ultimate purpose is to bring glory to the Father so that should in itself bring joy in our lives and able to endure those situations and circumstances that we find difficult.

But are you willing to do that this morning? Are you willing to take that step of faith? Let's pray. Lord, we come to You today.

We thank You so much for Your love for us and Your Word. And we thank You for this passage in Your Scriptures that show us how You have power over physical limitations and physical illnesses.

And we know that You have power over all things. And so whatever circumstance or situation that we find ourselves in today I pray that You give us faith to come to You and ask You, Lord to work in our lives in such a way that we cannot even begin to imagine that we can't even see coming but that it'll bring glory to You and when You speak when You direct we will follow we will obey and it's in Your holy name we pray.

[29 : 52] Amen. I want to ask the musicians to begin playing and if the Lord is leading you maybe just to come to the altar and pray or if you would like to pray with me I'd be glad to do that.

But in an attitude of prayer let us go to the Lord. Amen.