

John 9:1-34

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Preacher: Donald Martin

[0 : 0 0] I would say that I have the greatest privilege of standing here at the front, hearing you worshipping God. You've been singing so well today.

I don't know if this is normal in this church or not, but it's really sung well, and you've blessed my soul today. Thank you for that. A little while back in the 1860s, and I don't think there's anybody here who can remember quite that far back, under the auspices of what was then the Palestinian Exploration Fund, Charles Warren, an archaeologist called Charles Warren, was sent from this country to Israel to explore and to excavate around the city of Jerusalem.

Now, since any excavation on Temple Mount was banned by the Ottomans at the time, Warren began to excavate to the south of the city, to the south of Temple Mount, and there he uncovered a massive fortification.

What turned out to be what's called today the palace or the city of David. It became known then as the city of David Hill.

Warren entered the Geyond Spring. He crawled through Hezekiah's Tunnel, and some of us have crawled through or walked through Hezekiah's Tunnel, the wonderful thing to do.

[1 : 2 7] And he discovers a shaft which was named after him, and that was a source of water for the city. Now, over a hundred years later, in the 1990s, another two archaeologists, Ronnie Reich and Eli Shukron excavated the city of David Hill, and they continued on this for 15 years at least.

Now, I've visited some of these excavations with my groups over the last number of years, and it's fascinating. And we're going back again in March next year.

But none will be more fascinated for me this time than being able to walk on the road mentioned here in our reading tonight in John chapter 9, where the blind man walked from Temple Mount down the hill to the pool of Siloam.

Now, this road was only opened one month ago, four weeks ago today, that that road was reopened again after some 2,000, well, 1,900 plus years.

Look it up on Google, Pilgrim's Road, Jerusalem, and you'll find it's fascinating when you see what has been found there. It's not named the Pilgrim's Road because of pilgrims like we are today, but because of the first century pilgrims who would have come into the city for the annual feasts in the spring and in the autumn.

[3 : 0 2] How was it found? Well, after all these excavations going on in the city of David or city of David Hill, there was so much left undone.

And in 2004, there was local council workers came to the area to visit, to fix a burst pipe. But in Israel, you often have an archaeologist accompanying these workers just in case something is found.

And they found steps. And these steps actually led to the Pool of Siloam. The first time I was there, we were shown the Pool of Siloam.

This was in the 1990s, but it was the wrong one, the wrong place. They were puzzled when they found this, as to why the pool should be so isolated from the city.

Until they discovered the beginning of what is now called the Pilgrim's Path. From Siloam, right up to Temple Mount.

[4 : 13] It was found under rubble. Rubble of 2,000 years when the city was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans. And rubble ever since. And above that, what was there?

A potato field. And all this under it. It's incredible. You know, I believe that every student of the Bible should be excited, filled with excitement when these discoveries are made.

I hope you're reading the archaeological commentaries. And many of them confirming what we're reading here in Scripture.

So we're going to look together at this, well, what I believe is a very touching narrative of the physical healing of a man who was born blind.

After he traveled from the temple to the pool of Siloam. In fact, as far as I know, it's only one of two recorded miracles that our Savior performed in Jerusalem.

[5 : 25] Now, if I'm wrong, you can tell me. But as far as I know, there's only two recorded miracles in the city of Jerusalem. This one to the south of the city at the pool of Siloam.

And the other one to the north of the city at the pools of Bethesda. The healing of the blind man at Siloam and the healing of the man who was lame for 38 years.

And we read that in John 5. Now, there's an interesting aside to this whole story. When we think of the two healings here, the blind and the lame.

Matthew 21 and 9 says that Jesus is hailed when he comes into the city as the son of David. But more than that, we read that the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them.

Now, this could refer to these two. It could refer to others, of course. But there might well be a link here with the Old Testament. 2 Samuel 5 says that when David came into Jerusalem with his army, or into Jebus, the Jebusites were living there.

[6 : 45] And this is what they said, 2 Samuel 5 and 6. You will not get in there. Even the blind and the lame can ward you off, they thought. David cannot get in there.

Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the city of David. Now, go again to the Old Testament, to Leviticus, and you'll find that the blind and the lame are among Aaron's descendants.

And they were not allowed to become priests. They were impure. That was the thought. So, I believe what we see happening here in Matthew is that he's highlighting the reversal, almost.

In fact, the reversal of that priestly law or regulation. Jesus, the Messiah, enters Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. He is hailed as the son of David.

He heals the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, the blind man at the pool of Siloam, as part of his new creation. This blind man was now allowed to become part of the temple.

[7 : 55] No longer is he barred from becoming a priest, because he is part of the holy priesthood of believers. Isn't it wonderful what Jesus accomplishes? Here in this story.

In John chapter 8, we read Jesus saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And Jesus repeats the same idea in this next chapter, chapter 9 at verse 5.

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. But we may well ask in this story, just as the disciples of Jesus had asked, why was this man born blind?

Why are people today born with all kinds of deformities? When my daughter Jillian was on membership, she saw terrible deformities, and she maybe shared some of these things with you.

You remember a number of years ago, there was a TV program about the boy David, David Lopez, who was found in the jungle in Peru. It was Peru, I think. I think it was Peru. And David had succumbed to a flesh-eating disease, and the front of his face had disappeared.

[9 : 15] And this surgeon, Ian Jackson, took him from a jungle and performed over 100 operations on this boy David, the boy he later adopted.

And boy David appeared in this documentary a number of years ago. We may ask, why was David?

Why did David succumb to this flesh-eating disease in a faraway jungle where there was no medical help? Why did he succumb to this flesh-eating virus?

There was a servant of Yeshua, a servant of Jesus, speaking here in Huntley just a few weeks ago, six weeks ago, thereabouts. Elihi Ben Haim, he was speaking at the Israel Prayer Week.

He took ill, ended up in hospital in Aberdeen. His leg was amputated. He contacted flesh-eating disease. He died in Aberdeen, and his remains were taken back to Israel to be buried.

[10 : 16] Why did these things happen? Can we really and truly give answers? We cannot answer much except that these things are permitted by God himself, and through the pain, God's love is often revealed.

The reality is that people born with physical problems are able to overcome, often through the love of others, ordinary people like you and I, the medical profession, to become valuable and valued members of society.

You know, George Matheson, the minister who wrote, O love that wilt not let me go, was a blind man. Fanny Crosby, who wrote, thousands of hymns, was blind from the age of about eight.

Franklin Roosevelt, he was a president in America, he contacted Polo in 1921, confined to a wheelchair, and yet, he became the U.S. president from 1933 to 1945.

All difficult situations for all those affected and their families. And here in John 9, we find Jesus responding to the needs of this man and to a question posed by his own disciples.

[11 : 47] As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. The disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? And Jesus makes it very clear, neither this man nor his parents sinned.

Now, we know that we were born in the sin of Adam, we know that. But the rabbis believed that even the unborn child could sin.

And this belief may have, may have spurred them on, may have led them to this question being asked. But in this case, Jesus specifically says, 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. Well, I am in the world. I am the light of the world.

You see, what we find here is this situation was all in God's plan and purpose. A plan that we cannot always comprehend.

[12 : 58] We cannot always comprehend the plan he has for our own life. And Jesus here was doing the work of the Father among the people. And God's glory was being revealed through the life of this man.

Jesus, the light of the world, was giving light to a man born into darkness. But this is like a parable in itself.

Not only was light entering into the man's eyes, but the light of God was being shone right into the man's soul. Having said this, Jesus 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 Siloam.

This word means scent. It would have been very easy for the man to say, what a lot of rubbish.

[14 : 09] Mud in my eyes and go to a pool that heaven hardly get to. You remember how in the book of Genesis, it says, man was made from the dust of the earth.

And in Jeremiah, God is seen as a potter and we are the clay. Jeremiah 18 and 4 says, the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

This was God's remoulding plan in action. Moulding this person from the blind person he was to the person he wanted him to be, a person he could see, not only physically, but spiritually.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul says that we have treasures, this treasure in jars of clay. And these jars of clay, we are brittle. We're easily broken.

Do you feel broken tonight? Is God remoulding you through the brokenness of your life? I remember preaching in this story many, many years ago and I didn't quite understand, didn't quite have the same understanding here because it was, I thought, how difficult would it have been for the blind man to have come down there from Temple Mount to where the Pool of Siloam was and it was all rubble and all kinds of mess all the way down there.

[15 : 44] But then I didn't know at that time that there was a road here. Under all rubble on which the man walked, which was undiscovered until recently. And this man was sent by Jesus, we read.

Sent to the Pool of Siloam. It tells us that Siloam means sent. So he was sent there. Why? To be healed.

Why? For the glory of God. For this man, his physical eyes were opened through his obedience to the words of Jesus.

As I said, he could have stayed behind and said, what a lot of rubbish. I'm not going to listen to this nonsense, but he listened to the commanding voice of Jesus. So this man went and washed and came home seen.

You see, this man would have had to overcome many obstacles. But he came through by going down to the pool on that day where the healing could take place.

[16 : 56] And his spiritual eyes were opened. Imagine any of us being so trusting of Jesus as to do something like this man had done.

Well, perhaps Jesus has been speaking to your own heart of late. He wants you, he wants to send you on a journey.

He's set out a path before you. Oh, you have found many obstacles in life. And you feel this path is just too difficult.

How difficult would it have been for this blind man to have gone down from Temple Mount to the pool of Salome? I encourage you to press on and the Lord will shed his light on your path as you go.

Oh, I know there are times in our lives when we hit hard times and we wonder, is it worth going on? Is it worth going on in this role? Is it worth going on in this job?

[18 : 11] Is it worth going on with whatever situation we're in? Yet at the same time there's something in us in which we want to reach our goal because we feel that the Holy Spirit is spurring us on that we might find that we might find rest and peace for our own soul in our being healed spiritually in our being born again the road may have been anything but smooth.

We have some of us may have fought our way before coming into the kingdom in a sense we didn't want to go and we wanted to stay where we were. And we came fighting in but then to draw the pull of Jesus was so powerful we looked upon Jesus the man of compassion and he took us by the hand often through the help of others.

This this change in the formerly blind man was there for all to see. His neighbours his very own neighbours could hardly believe it was the same man.

Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg? Some claimed he was others said no he only looks like him it's his twin. Could it really be the same man?

He insists. He insists I am the man. How are your eyes open? They demanded. He replied the man they called Jesus. It shows you how much at this point he realised who Jesus was.

[20 : 00] He was a man called Jesus. He made some mud and put it in my eyes he told me to go to Salome and wash and so I washed so I went and washed and then I could see his thrust became faith.

the man didn't know what Jesus looked like he had never seen him he only knew his name he maybe had known him as a healer as a miracle maker do you hold on to the lovely and beautiful name of Jesus personally?

This is a name you love and although you haven't seen him or touched him he's touched you in your very soul and you love him deeply.

Where is this man they asked him I don't know he said you may be asking the same kind of question tonight but you know where he is tonight you know where Jesus is you know that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father and you know that Jesus is also right here with us through his Holy Spirit and he's dealing with individuals he's speaking to us and he wants you to know his healing tonight he wants to give your soul healing tonight this man may have been healed of his blindness but his story is so far complete and so it is with us when we are saved when we are born again whatever term we want to use and we know that at that point or from that point in our life it seems that

Satan sometimes comes as a flood to us trying to put more and more obstacles in our way to trip us up and we've just sung in the song when Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within who are you that you should follow Christ look at your life you're not worth anything up where I look and see him there made an end to all my sin do you hold on to this lovely name of Jesus tonight so it was with this man he knew the name of Jesus he was challenged by those around about him verse 13 says they brought him to the Pharisees to the man who had been blind now the day on which

[23 : 12] Jesus made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath what a sin that was therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight he put mud on my eyes the man replied and I watched and now I see some of the Pharisees this man is not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath this man is not from God he's just a fake the Pharisees saw the healing power of Jesus being performed on the Sabbath as breaking the law but there were those in the crowd who were not so sure and they asked well if this man is a sinner if this man is such a sinner how can he do such miraculous signs how can a sinner do such miraculous signs so many questions we too come up against certain dilemmas in our own day which way are we to go the hot potato in our nation maybe across the world today's

LGBT some say it's how God made them others believe that the practice stands against the teaching of God and scripture we hear of children being taught on gender issues which are contrary to what we read in the word of God is this not indoctrinating the mind of a child I fear for our children's future oh parents grandkids make sure that your offspring know the truths of this word of God pray pray pray verse 17 says finally they turn to the blind man what have you to say about him it is your eyes he opened the man replied he is a prophet he is a prophet although this man had been blind he now sees there's something special very special about Jesus and calls him a prophet and yet at this point he did not quite know who Jesus was verse 18 says the

Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for this man's parents is this your son they asked is this the one you say was born blind how is it he can now see see the Pharisees wanted to disprove who Jesus was they were more or less making out what that word again that we hear so often in the news that it was fake news but the parents confirmed that his previous condition was as being blind we know he is our son the parents answered and we know that he was born blind he is our son there's been a miracle in his life and when we see the miracle today of new life new birth in Christ it's a beautiful thing to behold pray for your families pray for your friends pray for your workmates that they may see the beauties of the risen

Lord Jesus Christ but the poor parents here you can imagine ordinary people and they didn't want to get into a scuffle as it were with the clever well educated Pharisees they were sort of unwilling to get drawn into this dispute but how he can now see or who opened his eyes we don't know ask him he's of age and he will speak for himself and his parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was a Christ would be put out to the synagogues that was why his parents said he is of age ask him how would you feel if you were put out of the church today for something you believed you can you can feel for the parents as well if we were questioned as they were questioned how would we stand today we can hardly throw any stones at this man's parents but here are the

Pharisees they're still unsatisfied and told the man had been blind give glory to God they said we know that this man's a sinner they still didn't want to give any glory to Jesus this was them trying to get this man now able to see to say that a miracle didn't happen that he was always able to see but he wasn't going to be drawn into their legalistic games had those Pharisees given given the man any assistance due to his blindness if so it was very little indeed he still had to beg at the temple gate you see if they had any compassion they would have looked after this man that shows us as the church today that we must still serve the people in need we must still serve the poor but Jesus himself said the poor you will always have with you but you will not always have me this once blind man had come into contact with Jesus the savior of sinners the savior of the world the man who had great compassion and now he's refusing to get drawn in to the dispute as well and he replied whether he is a sinner or not

[30 : 23] I don't know one thing I do know I was blind but now I see full stop that's it some of you may remember the name Cameron Stout he was a celebrity TV celebrity for a little while he won Big Brother back in 2003 and he was appearing in churches all over the place he was up in Gardenson as well and one time he was interviewed on radio there was Tommy Sheridan a politician there was a Sikh there and there was two others and before leaving the presenter said to Cameron Stout that he was greatly impressed about how relaxed he was about his faith greatly impressed about how relaxed he was about his faith this man who had been born blind was now very relaxed about his new found faith he knew that the work of grace had been done in him and their attitude caused him to in a sense give them a rebuke 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 this must have angered them when you or I or a celebrity like Cameron South was at the time or this man who had been born blind has been touched by Jesus when we stand by our experience of Jesus in our own lives no one can deny that the Lord has done a work of grace in us we can be powerful witnesses for our Lord today the depth of our faith individual faith can deeply impress others don't be afraid to say you belong to Christ don't shy away from it the Pharisees standing on their credentials as learned men here hurl insults at him you are this fellow's disciples we are the disciples of Moses law and grace we know that God spoke to

Moses but as for this fellow we don't even know where he comes from where has he appeared from these men had great learning they had studied the scriptures believers and yet they were the blind ones they were the ones who did not know everything the man answered in verse 30 now that is remarkable you do know where he comes from yet he opened my eyes we know that God does not listen to sinners he listens to godly men who do his will nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man drawn blind if this man is not from god he could do nothing this man this man who was buying the sea this man who healed me is god's representative he's from god the man's very limited yet wonderful experience has lifted him onto a higher plane than they were in before god that is the pharisees by giving testimony to what god had done in his life and they simply did not like it to this they replied you were steeped in sin at birth how dare you lecture us and they threw him out he was an embarrassment to him to them and we know that in our own day we've had many cases in right up and down our country where people who have stood their ground for their faith for their faith in christ have been sacked have lost their jobs have been demoted have been ridiculed thank god that he has raised up an institute like the christian institute who help in such cases today jesus wasn't acceptable in the temple subsequently he was crucified we can expect to be challenged in our own christian life even persecuted and yet dear christian friend the lord will never ever forsake us he did not forsake this man he could have left him to the pharisees but he went jesus went to look for him jesus heard that they had thrown him out and when he found him he said do you believe in the son of man who is his son the man asked tell me so that i may believe in him jesus said you have now seen him in fact he is the one speaking with you and the man said lord i believe and he worshipped him lord i believe have you come to that point in your own life where you can say to the promptings of the

holy spirit in your heart lord i believe i've gone on to worship him this is a wonderful story not only has this man been given physical sight he's also been given given a spiritual vision of who jesus is and he can do the same with you and with me you know when you when you truly come to meet with this jesus and come to zion as we were thinking of in the morning we do exactly as this man had done we go on to worship jesus and him alone in christ alone my hope is found no other can do and we can do no other than worship him now we've been here morning and evening today and is that what we've done together have we worshipped god here today oh we may have arrived this morning into these doors with a heart that wasn't really a heart of worship and I have to admit that

I have been I've come into a place of worship with a heart just like that from time to time but now that we have recalled these stories of the preparations that god has made for us through jesus and you may be asking jesus to come into your life don't be like the pharisees and say what are we blind to jesus said for judgment i have come into this world so the blind will see and those who see will come become blind some pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked what are we blind to and that is exactly what jesus was saying they had all this religious experience they had all this religious knowledge they had all this religious learning but they didn't have a relationship with the master himself and jesus said if you were blind you would not be guilty of sin but now that you claim to see your guilt remains you know god is not going to strive with man forever you ready to meet with this jesus tonight if you have never done so before come he's here to meet with you even if it's only you come to jesus and say to him lord i believe and worship them let's pray