# SERMON SERIES: SEE THE LIGHT

**“Eyes Wide Open”**

## *John 9:35-41*

 Today brings us to the conclusion of our sermon series entitled “See The Light.” Over the past three weeks we’ve been studying the ninth chapter of John’s gospel, and the interesting series of events between Jesus, a blind man, and the Pharisees. Let’s go ahead and turn to today’s Scripture reading, John 9:35-41.

 The story began with Jesus’ disciples noticing a man who’d been born blind. They were curious if the man was being punished for his own sins, or if he was being punished for the sins of his family. Jesus said it was neither of those, but so that God’s power might be revealed.

 Jesus made some mud, spread it over the man’s eyes, and told him to go wash it off. The man did as Jesus instructed and he came back seeing! But his friends and neighbors were confused about his identity. And then the Pharisees stepped in. They were angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath and that the formerly blind man couldn’t tell them anything about Jesus. They questioned the man’s parents but they were afraid of the religious leaders.

 So once again the Pharisees grilled the man. However, he wasn’t intimidated by their tactics or threats. After a testy exchange, they kicked him out of the synagogue, effectively excommunicating him from the religion of Israel.

 Let’s pick up the story in John 9:35-41: *35When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”*

*36The man answered, “Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him.”*

*37“You have seen him,” Jesus said, “and he is speaking to you!”*

*38“Yes, Lord, I believe!” the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.*

*39Then Jesus told him, “I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.”*

*40Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, “Are you saying we’re blind?”*

*41“If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty,” Jesus replied. “But you remain guilty because you claim you can see.*

 Jesus cares about both soul and body. ***Some ancient Greek philosophers, who lived hundreds of years before Jesus, developed an idea that the soul was good but the body was bad. The immaterial was what mattered; the material was of no consequence. This philosophy bled over into much of early Christianity, and even continues to this day. There were those who believed the body was a terrible, ugly, unimportant thing—a prison for the wonderful, eternal soul.*** ***Jesus nor the Scriptures validate that sort of thinking. Our physical bodies are important. They are ultimately not as important as our immortal souls, but they do have value and worth.*** Therefore, Jesus was concerned when he heard that the man had been excommunicated. He’d healed the man’s physical body and now Jesus knew the man’s spiritual self was also in trouble. *[Jesus] found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”*

*36The man answered, “Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him.”*

 In those days, belief did not mean intellectual acceptance, as we tend to think of belief. When we think of *believing* in something, we base it upon facts, data, or other empirical evidence. We reason. We think. We process the available information and decide whether or not we will accept something.

 Belief in Jesus’ day had more to do with action than in processing knowledge. To believe was to act in such a way as to support, honor or reinforce something. Jesus wasn't asking the man to intellectually agree with his identity. He was asking if the man wanted to begin living in a different way—a way like the Son of Man.

 The formerly blind man was very open but there was one problem: he didn’t know who the Son of Man was! He’d never seen Jesus. Remember that earlier the man returned from the pool but Jesus wasn’t around. In John 9:12 his friends asked him where Jesus was and the man told them he didn’t know.

*37“You have seen him,” Jesus said, “and he is speaking to you!”*

*38“Yes, Lord, I believe!” the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.*

Here we find the man coming to the end—and the beginning—of his understanding and relationship with Jesus. When this story began the blind man knew Jesus only by name: *“The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes…* (John 9:11). After receiving sight for the first time in his life, and having some time think things through, the next time the man spoke of Jesus was in John 9:17. The Pharisees interrogated him about the identity of Jesus and he replied *“I think he must be a prophet.”*

The next time the Pharisees questioned him, however, the man’s understanding of Jesus—and his own relationship to Jesus—had fundamentally changed. *27“Look!” the man exclaimed. “…Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”* The man knew that Jesus had done something miraculous. He was the proof! And it indicates the man had taken some sort of step to follow Jesus. He asked the Pharisees if they wanted “…*to become his disciples,* TOO*?”* The man had moved from hearing about Jesus, to calling him a prophet, to very likely following him (although he didn’t know who Jesus was). And now in verse 38 the man’s faith and knowledge all came together as he professed his allegiance to Jesus and worshiped him. *39Then Jesus told him, “I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.”*

 Once again the Pharisees were lurking in the background and Jesus called them out indirectly. *40Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, “Are you saying we’re blind?”*

*41“If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty,” Jesus replied. “But you remain guilty because you claim you can see.* Those who did not have the light--who lived in spiritual darkness--had the opportunity to have their eyes opened. The Pharisees had the exact same opportunity that the blind man had. And they knew enough to make a decision.

***I was once speaking with a friend who was struggling with some of the more difficult concepts of Christianity, such as the Trinity and the Holy Spirit. My friend was not a Christian but was asking the right questions. He said—like many people today—“I’m probably a nicer, better person than some Christians I know. I like to think I’m more kind-hearted, compassionate, and non-judgmental compared to some so-called Christians.”***

***I agreed that he was correct. However, I told him “We won’t be judged on how well we stacked up to other Christians. God won’t compare you to someone else. He’ll compare you to* himself*. Our measuring stick isn’t one another, but God.***

***My friend and I both agreed that was an impossible standard to reach. “Except,” I told him, “that Jesus has already met that standard. And when we accept his grace and new life, that standard is met in and through Jesus.”***

***“But what if I stand before God and tell him I didn’t fully understand everything, like the Trinity or the Holy Spirit? What if I told him I had too many questions and never made the choice? I tried to live a good life but didn’t know enough to make that kind of confession?”***

***I told my friend, “In that case, God will tell you—*that you knew enough*.” My friend was silent but slowly nodded his head. None of us have all the answers. Not every question gets answered. Not every facet of theology is ironed out and handed to us on a silver platter. But we know enough to make a choice.***

That’s where the Pharisees were at the end of John 9. They’d seen; they’d heard. They knew enough to make a decision regarding Jesus. Unfortunately most of them made the wrong decision. The formerly blind man had his eyes wide open to the possibilities, the truth, the reality, of Jesus. The Pharisees kept their spiritual eyes squeezed tight. The light of God was shining before them yet they wouldn’t see it. It was so obvious that they missed it.

***Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. They set up camp and after a good meal and a bottle of wine, they lay down for the night and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. “Watson, look up and tell me what you see.” Watson replied, “I see millions and millions of stars.”***

***“What does that tell you?” Homes asked.***

***“Well, astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all-powerful and the divine Creator. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Why, what does it tell you?”***

***Holmes replied, "Watson you idiot, it tells me that someone has stolen our tent!”***

While the Pharisees could recite the Law of Moses and could follow it nearly to the letter—while they had the theological answers for just about anything and everything—while they were considered the height of piety and perfection—they missed the fact that someone had stolen the tent!

Sometimes we’re blind to what God is doing right in our midst because, like the Pharisees, we simply don’t want to see. We prefer the darkness of our opinions or perspectives to the light of truth. Sometimes we’re blind due to some sin in our lives that clouds our vision. Sometimes we’re just too busy to see what’s most important.

***I’m sure we’re all fans of “The Andy Griffith Show.” You might remember an episode titled “Man in a Hurry.” Malcolm Tucker, a wealthy businessman from Charlotte, has car trouble outside Mayberry on a Sunday. Malcolm walks into town and meets Andy coming out of church.***

***Andy offers to assist Malcolm but warns that it’s nearly impossible to get anything done on a Sunday in Mayberry. Malcolm begins to lose patience when Wally, the filling station owner, refuses to fix the car: it’s his policy not to work on Sunday. Furthermore, Malcolm is dumbfounded when he learns that he can't even use the telephone because the elderly Mindelbright sisters use the party line to visit on Sunday afternoons, since they’re unable to get around very well.***

***Malcolm rants that the citizens of Mayberry are living in another world--that this is the twentieth century--and while the whole world is living in the space age, the town of Mayberry shuts down on Sundays.***

***On the front porch of Andy’s house, Malcolm actually begins to unwind as Barney and Andy sing “The Church in the Wildwood.” Gomer arrives and says that his cousin, Goober, has offered to fix the car. When Gomer returns with the car, Malcolm is surprised that there is no charge for the repair. Goober actually considered it an honor to work on such a fine vehicle. As Mr. Tucker prepares to leave, he stops and contemplates the events of the afternoon, as well as his return to the activities of his hectic life. Malcolm realizes that the very characteristics of Mayberry life that initially frustrated him are, in fact, the priorities he needs to establish in his own life. He decides to put his business on hold and stay the night in Mayberry.***

I think the reason the episode is so popular is that we can all see ourselves in Malcolm Tucker. We can all get caught up in our daily activities to the extent that we are blinded to everything else going on around us, and when things don’t go our way, we get upset. ***As has been said before, “Life is what happens while you’re busy making other plans.”***

This week I challenge you to intentionally slow down in some way. Sit longer on the porch. Enjoy the sunset. Play with the grandkids more. Listen to some good music that lightens your soul. Spend more time in prayer and the Scriptures.

 God never rests. He’s always at work. As you go about your lives this week, ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes wide to the presence of God around you. It may be in the color of changing leaves or the smile of a child. It may be the serenity of the night or the person ahead of you in line who needs help. If we allow it, God will show us things we’ve never seen before, things we’ve seen before but never paid attention to; and things we’ve seen so often we’ve come to ignore them or take them for granted.

 I close by offering you this Celtic blessing: “The eye of the great God be upon you. The eye of the God of glory be upon you. The eye of the Son of Virgin Mary be on you. The eye of the Spirit mild be on you, to aid you and to shepherd you. Oh, the kindly eye of the Three be upon you, to aid you and to shepherd you.” Amen.