

The Gospel of John

Lesson #84
The Journey
Jim Hoffman

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The Gospel of John

• John 9:13 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. 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." ²

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The Gospel of John

- Next his neighbors decide to involve "the Jews" when they bring the man to the Pharisees – why? Because Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath.
- Now enter another parallel – in chapter five there was the man healed by Jesus on the Sabbath and at a public Pool (the Pool of Bethesda).
- The man at the Pool of Bethesda was also healed on the Sabbath, but there are some real differences between the two men and their conditions. ³

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The Gospel of John

- The man at the Pool of Bethesda was hanging around the pool based on a pagan legend that an angel would come and stir the waters for healing.
- The man in John nine is hanging around the Temple Gate out of necessity and pragmatism. (Willie Sutton)

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The Gospel of John

- The man at the Pool of Bethesda was in his condition due to sin. (remember, Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.)
- The man in John nine was not blind due to sin, that was established in Jesus' conversation with his disciples around their "who sinned?" question.

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The Gospel of John

- The man at the Pool of Bethesda was quick to want to implicate Jesus to the Pharisees.
- The man in John nine had no interest in causing trouble for Jesus – it was his neighbors who brought him to the Pharisees.

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The Gospel of John

Neither man sought healing from Jesus – instead, Jesus sought them for his purposes. The man at the Pool of Bethesda served to glorify God and to bust the cruel myth that an angel coming to stir the waters in the Pool can heal. (many had clung to that lie to for years) The man born blind was chosen as one of Jesus’ signature miracles because he was blind from birth. Both men were miraculously healed, both knew what it was to be at the mercy of the public, and both their lives were significantly improved by Jesus, but only one seemed thankful. Two men, both healed by Jesus, and while the one believed and was saved, the other decided to “tell the teacher” on him.

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The Gospel of John

- 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.
- Part of the Pharisees could not think beyond their own noses about what it is to keep the sabbath.
- They were willing to ignore the obvious miracle Jesus did rather than examine what they had been told about keeping the sabbath.

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The Gospel of John

- Jesus did not break the 4th commandment to “Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy” – what he broke were the rules added by men over time.
- Exodus 20:8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.”

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The Gospel of John

• Matthew 12:10 And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. 11 He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

• The command could be written, "Rest and honor God on the Sabbath – good works of ministry done in his name are allowed on the Sabbath." 10

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The Gospel of John

• The evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was Messiah was building with each teaching and miracle that he did, and that presented a problem for the "Jews".

• Their theology did not allow for Messiah to actually come as promised – they were fine with the promise, but not so much with Messiah coming on their watch.

• In John 9 we see that whether it's miracles, or the coming of Messiah, neither was welcomed by the religious establishment of the day. (not on their agenda) 11

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The Gospel of John

• John 9:18 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." 12

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The Gospel of John

- The man’s parents are quizzed by the Jews looking for some way to discredit the miracle from Jesus.
- We can sense as we read the text the sort of power the Jewish leadership held over the members of each synagogue.
- What John writes is straightforward – his parents feared being “put out” of their synagogue if they so much as gave vague credit to Jesus for the miracle.

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The Gospel of John

- To be “unsynagogued” was to incur social, financial, and spiritual penalties – all “good” Jews had to keep a minimum of 6’ of distance away. (even family)
- There were three degrees to being unsynagogued – level 1 was 7-30 days, level 2 was 30 days and up, and level 3 was permanent.
- The social and economic circles of the day for many Jews was through their synagogue – think local church and your local neighborhood.

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The Gospel of John

- Imagine relying on your friends and neighbors to be your primary customers for the bread you bake, or for sandal repairs you do.
- The local synagogue could wreck your business and your life just by announcing your new status of being “out of the synagogue”.
- Even if you didn’t have a business, being “put out” could cost you friends, your job, and social interaction – a modern day equivalent is the “shunning” the Amish do.

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The Gospel of John

- The parents had seen before what it means to be unsynagogued – and they had no interest in being the next ones “put out”.
- This is the power of the threat of exclusion from the synagogue – the man’s parents were not willing to risk being “put out” even to support their son.
- The message to the unsynagogued was nearly the same as the societal message to the leper – stay back, don’t come near us!

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The Gospel of John

- 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.
- To give you some idea of the lever the “Jews” possessed think of what it means to be “cancelled” today.
- No credit cards, no bank account, no I.D., and only the bravest of your friends to help you.

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The Gospel of John

• John 9:24 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?”

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The Gospel of John

- “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”
- The man who was blind didn’t pretend to be a theologian, but he did something very wise and something no one can credibly deny.
- He couldn’t say what he didn’t know, but he was rock solid on what he did know – “I once was blind, but now I see thanks to Jesus”. (a line in Amazing Grace)

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The Gospel of John

- The Pharisees just cannot let this go – they see an opportunity to turn the crowds against Jesus and are determined to seize it.
- Their claim was this man (Jesus) is a sinner – that claim is based on his disobedience to their rules, not God’s commandments.
- Now the Pharisees launch in full prosecutor mode by rehashing the man man’s account of what happened – tell us again what Jesus did.

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The Gospel of John

- In the man’s reply to their badgering he insults the Pharisees by asking, “Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?”
- In the next section of the text, we are going to see the man’s astuteness regarding Judaism – they probably assumed that since he was blind, he was also deaf. 😊
- Remember he had been at the Temple gate begging for some time and had evidently learned a lot about the Old Testament scriptures.

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The Gospel of John

• John 9:28 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. 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, (your mother is fat) "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. ²²

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The Gospel of John

- John 9:30 The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 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."
- Proverbs 28:9 If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.
- Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

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The Gospel of John

• John 9:35 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. 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." ²⁴

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The Gospel of John

- John 9:35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"
- Let this scripture leap off the page at us – the man who was healed will now suffer even more for the "crime" of telling the truth about Jesus.
- The response of Christ – he hears, he seeks, and he personally delivers the gospel message to him, and the man believes.

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The Gospel of John

- John 9:39 Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."
- Jesus is the dividing line of all history – for it is the acceptance of, or the rejection of his person that divides all who lived, live now, and will live.
- Mankind is "sure" the dividing line is rooted in works or wealth, but mankind is more wrong on this issue than anyone can afford to be.

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The religious mantra of mankind has mostly been, "anyone and any way but Jesus".

There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.

Blaise Pascal

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The Gospel of John

- John 9:40 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."
- Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.
- The "Jews" were too proud to bend the knee to the King, and when the King is Jesus, consequences follow.

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The Gospel of John

Some are blind to truth and do not know it. Some are blind to the truth by their own choice. If one is willfully blind to the obvious truth concerning Jesus, there is no remedy for that – indeed there should not be a remedy for that. God wants to save all who believe, but for the one who refuses to believe the truth that is so clear, there is no help coming from God. Some who have the power of sight have been blinded by the very light that shines upon them because they fail to see the light as a benefit to them. Such people see themselves as enlightened, when the truth is they are living in the dark and are so content there they will not come out.

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Questions?

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