

Who Turned On the Light? Part 1

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[0 : 00] Father, thank you. What a joy it is to be in the house of the Lord. Thank you that better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere.

We could be anywhere else today, but Lord, we have gathered here at your feet under word and sacrament to declare that Jesus is Lord. And we know you are meeting us here and there will be healing.

There will be encouragement. There will be strengthening because you are present. You are present with us in a way that you're not at other times because we have gathered as your people to sit at your feet together.

We've said this time, this time is worthy of our sacrifice of our time and schedules. We said this moment to gather before you is sacred.

It is the Lord's day, not our day, your day. And we have come. So hear our cry. Hear our cry. We earn no points. We earn no points. We don't come to earn points from you.

[1 : 03] We come because we're hungry. And we need you. And we know you are present. May we see your glory. And may that transform us together.

Together as your people. Bless your word. May it go forth now with your power to do all your holy will in your people. And may you use your unworthy servant to speak only the truth of Christ and to exalt him.

In his name, Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. 12, let's see how far we get. As he, that is Jesus, passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.

And his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, it was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

[2 : 10] We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Having said these things, he stood on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which means scent. So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a bedder were saying, is this not the man who used to sit in bed?

Some said, yeah, it is he. Others said, no, no, no. But he kind of looks like him. He kept saying, I am the man, it's me. So they asked, so they said to him, then how were your eyes opened?

He answered, the man called Jesus, made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and received my sight.

[3 : 15] They said to him, where is he? He said, I do not know. This is beautiful. That is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Wow. Thank you, praise team, once again. Thank you, Kosh, for holding down the fort this weekend, man. Get everybody ready. When I was in college, knowing that many of us in my major would end up working with people with physical disabilities, we were given exercises to simulate their conditions.

Our professors wanted us to, as best as we could, understand what our patients would go through as best we could.

We did a couple of wheelchair sports. Shooting a basketball from a wheelchair is much harder than you think. The upper body strength is amazing. But the thing that really was most difficult for me was dissimulation on blindness.

We wore goggles that were blacked out. And then we had a spotter who would walk with us first around the room, just getting used to using your other senses.

[4 : 35] Because, you know, they become heightened, supposedly. And that's true when your eyes are no longer functioning. And so we had a spotter. The spotter was not allowed to touch us, unless, of course, we were about to do some damage to ourselves.

But they could talk to us. Now, that was okay. But then they took us outside. And Temple University, where Sandy and I graduated, is in a place in Philadelphia, right next to a something called, like we have one here, Broad Street.

Broad Street is always a very wide street, right? This Broad Street in Philly makes our Broad Street look silly. It's really wide. And traffic is flight.

Philly drivers are notorious, okay? And so we're out there. And I'll never forget, I'm walking on the sidewalk with my spotter. And I had sensory overload.

All the noises, the trucks going by, the cars going by, the horns honking. I could feel the breeze from the churches whizzing by. I'm on the sidewalk now.

[5 : 43] I'm safe. But it was sensory overload. I freaked out. I panicked. I remember ripping the goggles off my face. And now the spotter was with me.

But it was just too, it was just too much to handle. Because physical blindness, I'm going to, this is, I'm sure this is not even close, but it's a very difficult situation to be in.

Surgery may help. I don't know what the percentage is of those who surgery helps them. But many don't find that help.

For many, they will not see in this life. But when it comes to spiritual blindness, there is nothing anyone can do for you. There is no spotter.

When you are spiritually blind, you're in the dark, and there's no spotter. There's no one who can take away that spiritual blindness. And the thing about spiritual blindness, you don't know you're blind.

[6 : 56] You need the Lord Jesus to turn on the lights. And only he can. And when he does turn on the lights, everything changes.

Everything changes. You can see, finally. And you realize you were actually blind. Didn't even know it. Can you see?

Can you see? If so, what difference does seeing make in your life? How is seeing?

You say you see. How is seeing transforming how you live? I'm not sure how far we're going to get. We'll see.

But let's start right here. First of all, I want you to notice that all people are spiritually blind from birth. When we, for John, the Gospel of John, the writer of the Gospel, Jesus' miracles were signs, he says, that point us to greater truths about him.

[8 : 00] This man was born blind. Having never seen the beauty of God's creation. This points to how all humanity is born spiritual blind, unable to appreciate or see the beauty of God's reality and his creation.

Just as physical blindness keeps our eyes from being able to see, so too does the blindness of sin keep our spiritual eyes from seeing Christ and his kingdom reality.

And I think about this blindness. It's not only congenital, that is a condition from birth. It is also diabolical. 2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4.

Paul says, And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled, that you can't see it, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

There is an intelligent, evil, spiritual being at work to keep people from spiritually seeing who Jesus really is.

[9 : 27] In that condition, you cannot accept that he is more than a carpenter. You cannot accept that he is more than a preacher and that he is more than a prophet.

In that condition, there is nothing that can be done. But as I said at the multicultural worship conference Friday night, another thing the devil is doing now is he's causing those who do see to become spiritually nearsighted.

Nearsighted. So they see less of the majesty of the glory of Christ. Listen. In the gathered worship of God's people.

Someone accused me of putting a lot of emphasis one time on the worship service. I will not apologize for that.

The gathered worship of the body of Christ is significant. The Lord's day worship is, read the Bible, most of the, look at the emphasis it puts on gathering prayer, corporate prayer.

[10:39] The Lord's prayer, which we all pray, was a gathered prayer. Our Father. Our Father in heaven. It wasn't initially given as a prayer for individuals, though that's fine.

It was given as a prayer to the church. Jesus gave it to us to pray together. In Revelation, I preached on this Friday night, chapter 5, that text that we love so much that shows how Jesus redeems people from every tribe, nation, language, and tongue.

It is a gathered worship service where they are declaring together as the body that worthy is the Lamb who was slain.

Amen. Amen. You never minimize the gathered worship of God's people. People around the world are risking their lives to do this.

Why? They got small groups. Why are they risking their lives to gather together on the Lord's day in China or in Sudan or different parts around the world?

[11:49] Why are they risking it? Because they recognize what we have forgotten in this country, that this moment, this moment is particular. This moment is sacred.

When the people of God gather together before the living God on the word and sacrament together, declaring that we are the family of God. And he is Father. And he's all of our Father together.

What the enemy is doing is making us nearsighted. And we don't see the majesty and the glory of Christ in the gathered worship, which is why we can say, I think I won't go today.

When you see the glory of Jesus, that's what I preached at Friday night. When you see the glory of Jesus and the gathering of his people, nothing can keep you away.

Why would you not want to be there? Oh my goodness. It's like, are you kidding me? The lame, the blind will come out because you see, you know, in a significant manner, you're going to be in the presence of the living God with the people of God, declaring the worth of God.

[13:02] And he's seeing it all over the place. Something's gone wrong. We've been hoodwinked. We're giving up our inheritance.

Are you blown away by the glory of Christ? If you're not being blown away by seeing the image of God in the face of Christ Jesus, if you're not being blown away by his presence, listen, you will end up idolizing good experiences and causes more than his kingdom.

Because something will capture your imagination. Something will capture your heart. If it's not the majesty of Jesus, something else will sidetrack you.

Even good things. But that's what he's doing. But listen, that's the devil. Listen, listen. One of Satan's best tricks, though, is using our sinful hearts to make spiritually blind people believe they can see.

Go back to chapter 9 of John, if you have moved to 2 Corinthians, but you have your Bibles. If you need a Bible, grab one up to pew if it's up to you, but phone, whatever.

[14:21] In John chapter 9, verse 40 and 41, the same chapter. This is later in the story. Some of the Pharisees... The man's going to show up to the Pharisees at some point. Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, are we also blind?

Jesus said to them, if you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say we see, your guilt remains. They claimed, through practicing religion, to see spiritual realities, but they denied Jesus.

So Jesus says, your guilt remains. In other words, you can be a very church-going person. But if you're not seeing Jesus for who he is, he's not capturing your heart.

Your guilt remains. Because you don't see who he is. He's more than your life coach.

He's more than your therapist. He's a Lord of glory. He doesn't give advice. He tells you what to do.

[15:33] I know that's hard for millennials and Gen Z people and some of us older folk too. Some of us don't like being told what to do. I'm sorry to tell you, that's what it means to be a Christian.

God's going to tell you what to do. Jesus didn't say, let's hang out. He said, follow me.

When Peter, actually I'm not going to get through today, so just so you know. When Peter, at the end of the Gospel of John, remember Peter is looking, you know, Jesus just told Peter how he's going to die.

I don't know if Peter fully got what Jesus was saying, but he told Peter how he was going to die. The text says this. And Peter is walking and he sees John and he says, what about him?

What about that man? And Jesus, remember what Jesus said to him? That's none of your business. You follow me.

[16:35] That was not a suggestion. He doesn't give suggestions. He's the living God. And we've got to bring, and Christians, what it means to be a Christian is to submit to God.

Even Muslims got that right. To Muslim means one who submits. Christians, Christians, some of us, we don't see it.

When the light is turned on, we want to follow Jesus. Because he's done everything for us that we could not do for ourselves.

He's opened our eyes and we could never do it ourselves. It is only when we agree with Jesus that we are blind in sin and come to him for forgiveness and sight that our guilt is removed.

I'm getting ahead of the story. I'm getting ahead of the story. Jesus' disciples see this man. You see this, you know, in verse 2. They see this man born blind.

[17:47] And he's begging. He's a beggar. That's all you can do. As a blind man in that country, they didn't have systems in place like we do in this country. And in other countries, the same way in other countries today. There is no, there's no help for you.

If you are poor, you have no help. In that culture, a blind man had no hope other than begging. He's there on the side of the road. Jesus had just left the temple in John chapter 8.

And he's walking away. But he's still in Jerusalem. And he's nearby. He's still in Jerusalem. And he sees this man. And the disciples decide to ask a very theological question.

Some have said they were so insensitive to this man. I don't know about that. There was nothing they could do for him. They knew that. There's nothing we can do for a blind man.

And they're not. So they weren't thinking, let's do something for him. They weren't thinking Jesus will heal him either, it seems like. I don't know why they didn't think Jesus could heal him.

[18:43] Because he's healed everybody else. But they didn't seem to think that. What they thought about was a theological question. Who sinned? Because they recognized, listen, in their minds, bad things happen to bad people.

Good things happen to good people. Right? Right? Thank you, Cornell. That's legalism, by the way. We'll come back to that in a second. But the question is very interesting. Did this man sin in utero? Or did his parents sin that he was born blind?

That's pretty harsh. Shame and guilt producing, by the way, upon that dear man. He had no control over being born blind. But in that culture, there were these belief systems.

They weren't biblically based. They were beliefs. Be careful how beliefs that are not biblical infiltrate your thinking.

[19:42] Here's an example of that. So Jesus doesn't go into all kinds of details about it.

We know, we know that we live in a fallen world. And because we live in a fallen world, a world where sin has entered into everything and tainted the universe that God made good, we know that now people are born with disabilities.

We know that tsunamis take place and earthquakes. We know that famine takes place. We know that there exist people who will act like animals toward one another. And we also know they're respectable people who do horrible, sinful things.

This is the fallen world that we live in. They weren't thinking biblically fully on this issue, evidently.

The Pharisees believed this, too, because later in John chapter 9, verse 34, talking to the man himself, they say, You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?

And they cast him out. Verse 34. Everybody believes this crazy. Again, that's legalism.

[21:02] It's a one-to-one ratio for sin and consequences. If you do righteous, God will reward you. If bad things happen, it's because you did bad. You are a bad person.

And we still do this way today. We still think this way today. If something bad happens to someone, someone will speak of karma. What comes around goes around, right?

And usually we say that when the person now hurting was not liked and getting what they deserve.

Even being, even when we talk about reincarnation, it's to work out the bad things from the previous life.

Now, the Bible is clear that there is a price to pay for our sinful behavior. Whatsoever a man sows, they say, you also reap.

If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption. That's in Galatians, right? We know that. But it also shows us God's grace that because of Jesus, we do not ultimately get what our sins deserve.
[22 : 06] The wages of sin is death. But the gift of God, gift, grace, gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see it? Yes, the wages of sin is death. Yes, we get, yes, if we are walking in sin. Yes, if we dis, dis God altogether from our lives, we are lost.

But, but God is gracious and he comes to the blind who don't even know they're blind and gives them sight.

Hallelujah. And gives them sight so that now we can see the kingdom of God and see Jesus and come a running to him. God is gracious.

Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins. Doesn't mean we don't experience earthly consequences at times, though, right? Sometimes you've, the way you've lived, lived and you're a believer now, but now you're sick.

[23 : 15] Because of the way you've lived before you came to Christ. It happens, it happens all the time. Yes. And there are times, you know it, when you messed up and God just puts his hand over you.

And covers it. And talks to you about it. And you repent. But he covers it and the consequences just go away. They should have been consequences.

But God, but God. We are, we are there for a family. We are there for in the hands of a loving, sovereign God.

Not in the hands of fate or chance or karma. Jesus was showing his disciples and us that we are all blind.

But they didn't get it. What do you believe? Do you get it? That without Jesus, you're blind as a bat.

[24 : 19] My mom used to save me when I was a kid. She would send me into, Kevin, go get that. Go get something out of the bedroom upstairs in my bedroom. Go get that for me. She told me where it is.

I go upstairs. I'm a teenager. And you know what that means? Sometimes I search very diligently for anything mom says. I get up there.

Come down. I don't see it, mom. I don't see it. She'd go upstairs. Walk downstairs. And she would tell me. I heard this many times growing up.

Boy, you're blind in one eye and can't see out the other. That's how we are spiritually. We are blind in one eye and can't see out the other.

We can't see the glory of Jesus. Why? Because we've been blinded by our sin. And then the devil comes along and adds to that. That's double blind. But there is light.

[25 : 20] Brother Grisham, there's light. There's light. Second thing I want you to notice here, and I want in here, blindness is God's plan. Verses 3 and 4.

It is not that this, Jesus speaking, it is not that this man said. We must work the works of God who sent me while it's day. Night is coming when no one can work.

The Lord corrects there and our understanding. Our suffering is not necessarily caused by personal sin. Remember, we live in a fallen world. Bad things happen.

Yet God is still sovereign. In total control. so our Lord's words have great depth. In the face of persecution now, for speaking his words, here's what he says to his disciples in Matthew 10, 20 to 31.

It's the face of persecution he says. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[26 : 29] Are not two sparrows sold for a penny, and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore.

You are of more value than many sparrows. Even the suffering in the face of persecution is under the great control of our heavenly father, the Lord Jesus says.

So certainly when we come to physical illness, we can still have comfort that our situation is not out of control. Sometimes, sometimes our suffering is caused by stuff we did.

You shouldn't lie on your taxes. Hello. Sometimes you lost your temper while driving.

And you hit somebody by asking because you were so angry. Or you were texting while driving. Things happen because we do just the way it is.

[27 : 47] Sometimes we suffer because of it. But sometimes our suffering is so that God might display his glory and grace in us. Actually, I think it's always that way.

The road to getting there may be different, but if you are a child of God, whatever you're going through is so that God might display his glory.

Whether it was done to you, whether you did it to yourself, or whether it just seems to come out of the blue. When people who are incredibly healthy, working out every day, lean, mean, felt, I hate them.

And then they get cancer. And you can't, they eat right there, and you can't, what's that, what? How's that? And they're children of God. They're Christians who are faithful Christians. And they go, where'd that come from?

Don Piper wrote a book called Don't Waste Your Cancer. I commend it to you. Little thin thing.

Listen. Sometimes our suffering so that God might display his glory and his grace in us.

[28 : 57] That was certainly true of Job, right? John is highlighting our natural spiritual blindness here.

The fall. People have always speculated. Why did God allow the fall? Couldn't he have stopped Adam and Eve? Couldn't he have stopped the serpent?

I mean, he knew the devil was there. The devil was in the garden. He knew it. Couldn't he have stopped it? I am convinced. You can argue if you want.

I know I'm okay with it. You know, but I'm convinced that what Jesus says here is true of that. He allowed the fall to display his own glory in the working through history, carving out a people for himself, showing the nation, showing the world how glorious he is so that people would seek him with all their hearts and he would reveal himself to them and blow our minds with who he is and how gracious and loving and kind and merciful he is.

Unlike the gods of the nations who are idols and they exist today in America. We worship them today. The goddess Aphrodite.

[30 : 30] We are all, we just got to be in love. We're romance. We, we, materialism, all those various things. We're, the God of, the Aries, the God of war.

You are an aggressive, angry man. And you think it's okay because you get the job done. You are worshiping an idol. We still do it.

It's just different names. They're all false gods and God is gracious and he's allowed the fall and to show us that there is someone greater and better.

This man's blindness was not for anything more, anything less than that Jesus might come.

Oh, hallelujah. That he might be a trophy of the grace of God through Jesus. that his life might be changed and transformed when Jesus walks by at just the right moment to touch him and give him sight.

[31 : 45] Do you understand? Jesus, Jesus even says, this is my work. I got to do this work now. He saw this man. This was his, this was a personal mission for Jesus to do the work.

By the way, work, the idea of working in the day and not working at night, that's probably a reference to that time when Jesus would die on the cross and be in the tomb. At that point, that is night and he's not working.

The disciples were not working. They were running and hiding. We don't live in that time. Only time we'd stop working is when we go to be with Jesus. Jesus, we live in the, we live in the day.

This is the day. And Jesus is calling us to walk with him and work with him in touching and transforming people's lives.

Jesus did it right here. He touched that man and he set him free. always remember that whatever you are suffering in this life is nothing compared to the suffering of hell.

[32 : 59] Eternal separation from God. Jesus went as it were suffered hell for you. on the cross when he cried out my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The son was separated from the father for the first time in all eternity. He suffered for those three hours on the cross he suffered eternity for those of us who trust in him.

You don't have to worry. Listen, whatever you're suffering, whatever suffering you face, God is working in it so that his works of grace and power might be displayed in you for the glory of his son. He's at work and you're suffering painful as it may be is nothing compared to what God has saved you from. Do you see it?

Our light, Paul will say later in 2 Corinthians, our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all. Do you understand?

[34 : 07] Are the lights on? Do you see? Do you see? I know sometimes it takes a minute to see it.

I understand. Believe me. Sometimes you're in the midst of something and you're in the pain and it won't go away. It may take you a moment. You may have to fight through the dark for a little bit.

You may have to keep but here's the thing. Here's the thing. He won't let you go. Come. And as you keep coming, if you will keep coming to him, keep coming to his work.

Don't run away. It's painful. I know you're hurting but don't run away from him. Listen, listen. And don't run away even from gathered worship. Come because you're, this is a place where he's going to manifest himself powerfully but you're in the dark.

I understand. I feel you, Christian. I feel you. But he's going to turn the light on and he'll let you see that all throughout this whole time he's been working in you.

[35 : 16] He's doing something in you. In the middle, in the middle of your pain, he's not, it's not wasted. He's doing something in you. In the middle of your trial, he's doing something in you.

And when he finally, when the light finally turns on and you, and you see, oh, joy, weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning because Jesus turns on the lights for his people. keep close to his presence and word. Where are you?

Where are you on your journey? Are your eyes open? Do you see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus who is the image of God?

do you see his glory? Are the lights on? Do you see his majesty? Do you, do you see him, the lamb that was slain, standing before the, go back to John, Revelation chapter 5, man, just on that passage, it's glorious, chapter 4 and chapter 5.

[36 : 40] Read it for yourself. Get Nancy Guthy's commentary. It's really neat. Some of you are reading that, I think, studying that. It's a great, it's a great book. Listen, he comes before, he comes, the ancient of days sitting on the throne.

This is Revelation. He wants us to see this. He's written, he wrote this story to people who are hurting, who were being persecuted by the emperor Domitian and in the Roman Empire, they were, the saints were under fire and the book of Revelation was given in particular to encourage them to turn the lights on so that they would know that Jesus has won the battle.

Hang on. Don't give up. Okay? That's for you. That's for you. And what they need to see was in chapter 4 was the ancient of days.

John is caught up to heaven. That's not the rapture, by the way, from my dispensation on brothers and sisters. That's not the rapture. But he was caught up and he goes in and he's like part of the third heaven. Remember? He goes in and he sees on a throne the most beautiful being of all, like a precious stone sitting on the throne and the rainbows around this throne and thunder and lightning are coming from the throne and he's in the presence of the living God.

I mean, I'm just blown away telling you about it. It's more, John is struck and he sees, he sees seraphim, angel, angelic beings and he sees 24 elders, old covenant, new covenant, represented around the throne and they're all bowing before the God of heaven and they're worshiping him.

[38 : 15] Do you see him? Do you see the glory of your father? They need to see that and then he has a scroll in his hand. It's a scroll that unfolds God's plan for redemptive history throughout all time and he has a scroll but it's sealed with seven seals.

No one in heaven, including John, is worthy to open it. And then John says, and I'll just say, hold on John, John's weeping, he's wailing, no one can open it, no one can do it and then, Elder says, hold it, listen, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has conquered and then John says, and then I saw a lamb as though it had been slain standing in the midst of them with seven horns.

He goes up to the Ancient of Days and takes the scroll and he opens it because Jesus controls the destiny of the universe. It's all for him and for his glory and he opens the scroll and there you see the whole of heaven.

That's why when people say they died and went to heaven and don't see this, they didn't go to heaven. This is the center of heaven, the center of heaven. God and all of his glory and the Lamb of God and the angels and everybody's falling down and they start singing.

Singing is a response to seeing the glory. Singing is not the glory. It's a response to the glory.

[39 : 52] It's our response. God ain't singing. And they say, worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Do you see him?

Do you see him in love? Is he worthy? Is he of great worth and great value to you? So much so that even in your pain and suffering, the light is on and you see him and you say, it's going to be all right. I know I'm hurting. I know it's bad, looks bad, but listen, if we will trust him and keep our eyes on him, the offer and perfecter of our faith, whom for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down right now at the right hand of the Father on high, if we will keep our eyes on him.

Because we can see, right? Right? Or are you in the dark? Has any made you nearsighted? Or have you never seen the glory of Jesus? Either way, call upon him. Call upon him so that he can open your eyes.

[41 : 05] And when he opens your eyes, you'll be okay. You'll see. But you'll see. You'll be okay.

Circumstances might not change right away or at all, but you've changed. You've been changed by his touch, by the touch of the master's hand.

Do you want that touch today? Do you need that touch today? Because you're hurting, you can't see it. You're a child of God. Do you want that touch today? Do you need it? He wants to open your eyes.

And if you've never, never ever felt this touch, he's willing to open your eyes for real, for true, forever, today too. Well, do you prefer blindness?

Please don't prefer blindness. Father, help us open our eyes. We are in different places in our situations.

[42 : 10] Open our eyes, please. Let us see Jesus. Let us see the hope of heaven. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.