

Time of Grace Ministry
He Cares; We Care: About the Sick
October 7, 2012
John 9:1-11; 35-39

Is there anybody in your life who's sick right now – really sick?

One of the really interesting things about the New Testament is that it not only tells us the life of Christ, but it also gives us four different looks, or four different biographies, of our Savior Jesus.

The first four books of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – each give us a different vantage point. John's is the most unusual of all. The other three have more of a similarity of viewpoint. John, perhaps because he wrote last, adds all kinds of different information the others don't, and he's heavy on the dialogue. If you really want to hear the voice of Jesus, John's Gospel has the most.

And one of the things that you'll notice in John's Gospel is he uses quotations from Jesus' "I Am" descriptors of himself. Not only does he use the phrase, "I Am," which is the royal word for God himself, but he gives different metaphors for what he does in his work. And in today's Bible study, he's going to use that beautiful phrase, "I Am the Light of the world." We can see how much he cares for people in their times of hurting because he brings light to a man who was born blind. Let's go to St. John Chapter Nine.

Today is the final portion that I have been bringing to you called, "He Cares; We Care," and I've been talking to you about some of the different aspects of human life over which the Lord Jesus has a great deal of compassion – children, senior citizens, the lost. Today, I want to talk to you about his care for the human condition – he cares for our bodies; he cares about the sick. And when we are sick, he is sick inside. He hurts when we hurt.

And our story today begins in John 9, and we're going to discover one of these "I Am" statements that John is famous for. Of all of the biographies of Christ, the fourth one has the most "I Am" statements. There are ten of them; see if you can spot the one – well, of course you'll spot it now; I told you about it. But be watching for it, okay?

John 9:1: "As Jesus went along..." it's a Saturday and of course, he's going to do something on Saturday and infuriate the Pharisees all over again. "He saw a man blind from birth." How could it not just hit you right here? Every birth defect hurts the hearts of everyone with whom they come into contact, isn't it so? And his big compassionate heart hurt to see the way that that man had struggled. I don't know, do you think it would be worse – if he had a choice – would you rather be blind from birth or have had vision for a while and then have an accident where it's taken away? They both sound pretty bad, don't they? Would you want to know what colors and faces look like and then have that taken away? Or would it be better never to know what you're missing? Bad either way, isn't it? It's a horrible choice – I wouldn't want to have to make that choice.

This man, though, never was sighted. Let me tell you something – this is the day before social security. There was no disability insurance to get in on. There was nobody paying this man for having a broken body. There's no Badger Care; no Badger Home for the Blind, the way there is here in our town. How do you think he made a living? How do you think he could eat from day to day? Guess. By begging.

Not only do you struggle with having to be led around like a small child – how embarrassing is that for a man? A man takes care of himself. How humiliating is it when you have to depend on other people? It's hard on a man's spirit, besides being hard on his body. But then to have to hold out your hand? There were no jobs – you couldn't hire people to do stuff back then. There's not much that was worth paying money for if you couldn't see. So this man had a miserable life.

But things were about to change, because he met Jesus. His disciples wanted to know – “Why?” There was no compassion for this man; you're not going to hear any gentle, kind words about him. They wanted to know why. They wanted to do to him what Job's friends did to him. When Job's friends – have you ever read the whole book of Job? Not just the happy one (verse) about the Redeemer living? Did you ever read that miserable conversation between his so-called friends and him? Did you ever read that? What is their goal in talking to him? They want to find out the blame. “Whose fault is your misery, because we don't want that to happen to us. What did you do that we better make sure we avoid? What have you done to so infuriate God?” And that's what the disciples were like – just like Job's friends.

“Man, what a loser. Who's the loser – him or his parents? Who's getting punished here?” Isn't that a horrible mind game to play on people with some kind of disability or injury? Has anybody ever done that to you? Have you ever done that to somebody else? Have you ever done it to yourself where you took something – some blow, some hardship that came upon you – and then tried to trace it backwards and see, “Am I getting punished here?”

Let me tell you something – when you're a believer in the Lord God, when you are a believer in Jesus Christ your Savior, all the punishing is over! There is no more condemnation for all who are in Christ Jesus. When you look at the hard things that may have come upon you in your life, you do not have to trace it backwards and say, “I wonder if I'm getting punished? Finally, the hammer is coming down. I know I've infuriated God so many times. Alright, I guess I've got this coming.”

Don't talk like that because it's not true. If you really believe the gospel's message then you know that the hammer, for one hundred percent of your sins, came down one hundred percent on Jesus. And he paid one hundred percent of your debts and you are one hundred percent forgiven and loved.

No, Jesus had a completely different view of what's going on here. He said, “No, no, no – neither this man, nor his parents, sinned. This is not about punishment.” “But this happened...” why? “So that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” “He's going to be a canvas for me to paint on.” He is going to be a vehicle by which God can be given glory. His life is going to be an example of how God helps people, how God is involved in their lives, interacts with us,

and God is going to get more done through his brokenness than if he had clear vision from the time he was a baby.

A blind man is going to be more useful to God, blind from birth, than if he had been sighted. If you know people who drag around the wounds of some kind of disability, watch for what God is doing, and celebrate their value to God's unfolding of his kingdom plans. If you, yourself, should bear the blow of something heavy going on, rejoice that God thinks you are more useful wounded than whole. And after all, we're here; we're in God's play, aren't we? We all want to be the star, we all want to be rich and we all want to be famous. But Jesus said, "This has happened so that God's work can be displayed in his life. As long as it's day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night's coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light..." – not "a" light, "the" Light "...of the world."

(Jesus) "You're lost, you're stumbling, you're going down if I am not illuminating your path. Only can you find the path if my light shines, and I show you which path to be on." Let me (Pastor Jeske) tell you this – Christian testimony of the beauty of God, the grace of God, the wonder of God, the love of God, the power of God, the resurrecting ability of God, the God who can make a way out of no way, the God who makes things happen when nothing's happening – that testimony sounds a lot more believable coming from somebody who's been wounded than from somebody who's got it all. If an extremely wealthy person says, "Put your trust in God; he'll always take care of you," you can say, "Oh, right. Easy for you to say."

When someone who's born blind says, "Trust in God, he'll be there for you and bring you whatever you really need," that's believable because that person has been helped to survive and has a happy cheerful spirit in spite of the disability. God gets more done through his wounded messengers and healers, and here's one right now. Jesus said, "We're almost out of time! Work NOW. Let your body be a canvas for me to paint on now, because the game is almost over; you'll be dead soon. Make this disability work for you and work for me. You're more valuable to me wounded than one hundred percent because you need me, and I can do things for you when you need me. If you're so full of yourself that you've got it all now, you don't need me and then my work can't reflect me; I can't interact with you because you don't need me. And in fact, you're going to work against me because you look like you've got it all together and you're blowing me off and yet, you look like you're happy and rich and everything – you're actually dangerous to me! You're worth more to me with your wounds."

"Having said this, he spit on the ground." Now, that's not polite, is it? My mother used to tell me not to spit. Wives, do your husbands ever spit on the ground? It's considered impolite, isn't it? But frankly guys, I don't know that I like seeing women do it, but as a guy, we have cards – we have guy cards in our wallet, don't we? There's certain things we can do, like drinking straight out of the milk carton, that women are not supposed to do. Spitting is one of them; considered kind of low-class. But if a guy does it, it's like, "Well, okay, he's a guy," but women are not allowed to do it.

You normally don't think of Jesus hacking a big loogie and firing it on the ground; you just don't. It's weird, isn't it? It gets weirder. This is a dry land; there's nothing but dust. This is a desert climate that they live in.

He stoops down to where he spit, smushes around with his finger, and gets saliva mud on his hands and he goes over to the man – who clearly couldn't see him coming – and he probably put his arm around the back of his head so he couldn't jerk it away from the start, from the surprise of it, and guess what Jesus does with it? He smears it (the mud) on the man's eyes.

Let me explain something to you – one of the most significant ways that you can insult another human being is to have your saliva on their face! Here's a tip: Don't do it to anybody else. Here's this man thinking, "Where did that mud come from?" It hadn't rained in three months. He could maybe hear Jesus spit and he thought, "Oh, God. His spit is on my face. What is that gross yuck on my face?"

This is a test! Jesus could have said, "Hey, eyeballs, start working again," and it would have happened. Jesus wanted several things to happen. He wanted to call attention that this wasn't a coincidence, like if the guy said, "Hey man, I was just walking home and all of a sudden I could see." He wanted to draw a line between Christ and his eyeballs, and so he did this elaborate charade to get the guy's attention – and incidentally, to get everybody else's attention, too.

Then he (Jesus) says, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam." Made him do something to "commit." This was his testing time. "You trust me or not? Am I here to help you or am I a threat to you?" And that put that guy to the test. He had to step up, and this was a faith building exercise so that man would commit; so he'd go all in. He'd look like an idiot. Imagine walking through town and being led along; you've got this spit mud, saliva mud, dripping down your cheeks. Imagine what an idiot he felt like? "Okay, you trust me or not?" This was commitment time.

Now, the Pool of Siloam was a pretty cool place. This is a dry land; there are no pools. This is desert country. Seven hundred years earlier, King Hezekiah was figuring Jerusalem, in a matter of days or weeks, was going to be under siege, so he frantically rebuilt and shored up the walls of Jerusalem. But he also knew, "We've got to load up with food." But even more urgent than food is what? Water. There was not a good natural protected water supply in Jerusalem. King Hezekiah, in fear of the Assyrians, had his engineers go to the Gihon Spring, which is north and east of Jerusalem, and cut a channel through rock to get a water supply to run through the middle of the city, and then they had it run downhill and it spilled out below the city at the bottom. And they built a little pool, which then could be used for public bathing. The drinking water could be pulled from upstream, and then the pool at the bottom was used as a public bath because they had no plumbing then. Nobody had running water in their homes, so for the poor, this was a place where they could be clean. The Pool of Siloam – it says, meaning "sent." "Shalach," in Hebrew, means, "to send." So this is like an aqueduct; the Siloam aqueduct, bringing water.

Let me just throw a little aside here – those guys were cool! His engineers were awesome! With no dynamite, no blasting caps, no mechanical drilling equipment, no earth boring machines, just hammers, chisels and whatever drill bits they could have invented – they did have drills, handheld braces, bits and braces – they drilled a passageway two feet wide and six feet tall, one thousand seven hundred and fifty feet through rock! That's like over five football fields. And the two – and here's an even cooler thing – they had two teams because of the shortness of time. They managed to meet with no sonar or x-ray equipment. Isn't that cool? I think that's amazing.

So he says, “Go wash!” The guy goes, he passes his test; and with mud and spit streaming down his face, goes and washes. And his neighbors say, “Hey, wasn’t this the guy who used to sit and beg?” But he went and he washed and he came home seeing! For his first time ever, he saw the faces of the people that he loved and that loved him. For the first time ever, he saw colors. For the first time ever, he didn’t need somebody else to lead him around like a child. He could stand up on his hind legs like a man and take care of himself. He loved everything about that day!

Do you know what else he did – I think? Forgive me, Holy Spirit, if I’m reading too much into this. I think he ran a little bit. Do you know something – blind people walk pretty good; they don’t like to run for obvious reasons. I think he ran a little bit because he could. And he wanted to go talk to the guy who had done this to him.

If you just let your eyes jump to the end of the story in verse 35 – he was telling people about Jesus, whoever this was; he so infuriated the Pharisees that they excommunicated him from their synagogue. When Jesus found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

“‘Who is he, sir? Tell me, so I can believe in him.’ Jesus said, ‘You have now seen him. In fact, he’s speaking with you.’ And the man said, ‘Lord, I believe’ and worshiped him. And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who think they see will be revealed at how blind they really are.’” Because what Jesus is interested in doing in the here and now in this broken world is drawing people to him. If you’ve got faith in Christ, you’ve got everything! With faith in Christ you’re a millionaire, a heavenly millionaire.

With faith in Christ you’re immortal; you’re bulletproof. You’ve transcended; you’re better than the angels. If you do not have faith in Christ, all you have is judgment and anger coming down on you. It doesn’t matter how much money you’ve got, you can’t buy off this Judge. You can’t pay your way out of this court. Now, there’s no lawyer with a dime of your money that’s going to make a bit of difference, for you will stand convicted in God’s court.

What God cares most of all about, and he wants you to care about, is faith in him connecting to the life source, to the Light of the world, the Bread of life. The way, the truth, and the life.

So what? In a few minutes we’ll be going home. So what? Alright, so Jesus did a cool thing for some blind guy long ago. That’s two thousand years ago, and why doesn’t he wipe out blindness today? I’ve got friends who are blind. I’ve got friends who are disabled. I have friends in wheelchairs. There are people that I love that have to be led around. People I love have to live in assisted living because they can’t live on their own anymore. People I love are limping. People I love are going into surgery this week. People I love didn’t make it; they died on the table. So what?

Here’s so what. When the prophet Isaiah tells you in Isaiah 35: “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened.” That’s when he’s going to do it on a universal scale. “Then the ears of the deaf unstopped.” When Christ returns he’s going to do what we crave – mass, universal, restoration to health of all the believers. Notice the key word – “believers.”

He showed you what he can do, and what he did to that blind man is a demo, like a demo reel, to show you what's going to be happening to give you hope to hang on. That man was a canvas for Christ to paint on. Let him use your weaknesses and disabilities, your sickness and frustration, as a canvas for God to paint on. You don't even know the value your testimony has in your moment of weakness, bankruptcy, unemployment, poverty, limping, maybe even blindness. Let God use you to make his name great, to encourage people to believe; because if you've got faith, everything is going to be happening for you.

And finally, Dr. Jesus is still at work! Bit by bit, he's been pulling back the veil of the secrets of the body and he is behind, as gifts to you and to me, the incredible advances in medical science that is increasing the quality of our lives and stretching out the quantity of our lives.

Here's a salute to all of you who are medical professionals, who in laboratories, at bedsides and in O.R.'s all over the world – you are acting as the fingers and compassionate heart of Dr. Jesus in bringing healing into our world. So here's a big thank you in what you do to patch people up and keep them going. But realize that even when you fail, your patients eventually will die on you. You cannot keep them alive forever. Jesus can.

But I want you to know this – no matter what your disability, or the ones of the people you love – he cares! He cares; especially when we hurt; and we care, too.

Amen.

I'd like to pray with you today.

Dear Lord, we come today mindful of all of the people that are dear to our hearts and close to us who are struggling and suffering. Just as that man who was born blind, so many people have physical limitations and illnesses. Lord, you are the light of the world and the Lord of our bodies. Smile down upon us with the healing that we need. Bring mercy and strength to our bodies and build up our faith in you, our only Savior. We pray through your holy name, Amen.

For Time of Grace, I'm Pastor Mark Jeske, reminding you that every day is a day of God's wonderful grace for you.



Grace Notes

Guides for Personal Bible Study

He Cares; We Care: For the Sick

John 9:1-12,35-41: 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 Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said. [Jesus] found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" 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." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

Points to Ponder

- **Read Romans 8:1.** Does God punish believers? Why or why not?
- Read John 9:3 again. According to Jesus' answer, why does God allow his believers to suffer disabilities and pain?
- Read verse 39. What is Jesus' main goal for taking on human flesh and coming to this world?
- How many people who are close to you suffer from disabilities? Have you seen any special or unusual ways that God has used those people not in spite of but because of their disability to give a more powerful testimony? What have they taught you, for instance?
- Read Isaiah 35. How does that chapter show that you will witness the miracle of John 9 on a grand scale?

The Bottom Line

Jesus used the miraculous healing of the blind man to bring the man closer to him and to reveal God's glory to witnesses of the event. God also uses our sicknesses, failings, and diseases to strengthen our faith and point us to the new bodies we will enjoy in heaven because of Jesus. We can use the difficulties we have in life as stepping off points for strong witness to others.

You can dig deeper into your Bible by reading more about these truths from the lesson:

- **The Blind See:** Psalm 119:18; Isaiah 35:4,5; John 8:12; John 12:46; Acts 26:17,18; Ephesians 5:8
- **Hope in Sickness:** Psalm 27:14; Psalm 91:1-16; John 14:1; Philippians 4:6; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:7
- **New Bodies in Heaven:** 2 Corinthians 5:1; 1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:20,21; 1 Corinthians 15:51,52

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