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## LIFE IN HIS NAME

### DO YOU SEE JESUS

John 9:1-12

As he 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. 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 spit 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 Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” 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.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

My daughter was telling me recently about a new acquaintance that she has met, a woman who rescues exotic animals. This lady brought over a fox that she had rescued, and this fox had only three feet. I’m not sure if foxes have feet or paws or exactly what they have, but this fox only had three of them. My daughter sent me a little video of this fox running around on three legs and trying to use the fourth, even though there was part of an appendage missing. I thought, “Wow, that’s interesting,” and I wanted to know more about just how you do that, and rescuing exotic animals.

Then I was thinking, “Isn’t it even better to rescue people?” I think that sometimes as people our souls are fractured. We are missing some limbs in our souls sometimes. We are paralyzed in portions of our soul. And I think that God rescues us. He restores us. When he does that, he then calls us to be a part of that rescue process in the lives of other people. It’s amazing - just how

individuals have entire sections of our souls missing, but when people love us and introduce us to Christ and the love of God, we begin to feel again in a way that's healthy and right.

Jesus encounters a man here in John Chapter 9 who has a very serious physical challenge, and he restores him. He rescues him in a very dramatic miracle. He is fulfilling his call from the Father. He is on this massive rescue mission. In fact, if you've been with us for the study of John you know that John is one of those biblical writers who actually tell you their purpose.

Near the end of the book, in John 20:30-31 (we have looked at this a number of times, but it's just great to keep before us) John writes, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Believing in Jesus, you will have live in his name, life in Christ. Throughout our study we have been seeing this.

- Do you remember John Chapter 3? Nicodemus comes to Jesus, a powerful leader. Jesus tells him, "I have the power to give life, for you to experience new birth. You must be born again." Then this famous verse that many of us have heard: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."
- Then John Chapter 4, the encounter with the woman at the well. Didn't you enjoy once again hearing of this dramatic encounter? Jesus makes this promise to this woman at the well: "...whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
- In John Chapter 5 Jesus raises up a man who is lame and in doing so he proclaims these words in John 5:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life."
- In John Chapter 6 Jesus feeds thousands, 5000 plus. There he proclaims: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."
- In John Chapter 7 at the Feast of the Tabernacles, the water ceremony is a part of the feast. In the midst of that celebration Jesus stands up and proclaims: "Whoever believes in

me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

- Then John Chapter 8, still at the Feast of Tabernacles, the light ceremony, the lighting of the four candelabras in the outer court, the people were celebrating, dancing in the streets, lighting torches. Jesus stood up and proclaimed: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." There is life in Jesus Christ. That's John's message. Believe in him. There is life.

This last metaphor, Jesus is the light of the world, is really what's taught and demonstrated in this miracle. Remember that for John the miracles are signs. He presents them to us, pointing to a deeper spiritual reality. They teach us about Jesus. Here, this miracle teaches us that Jesus is the light of the world. You may have noticed that Jesus makes that very connection in the text in verse 5: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Obviously, one way this miracle teaches this is when a blind man was given his sight and he was able to see, demonstrating that Jesus is the light of the world.

But the story, as we will see as we study the entire chapter in weeks to come, is actually much more involved than that. As the story progresses, the blind man is given his sight and he comes to a deeper and deeper, clearer and clearer knowledge of who Jesus is. And as that is happening, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, the Pharisees, who are trapped and lost in darkness, go further and further, deeper and deeper into their darkness. So they get further away from Jesus as the healed man now gains a clearer and deeper understanding of who he is. We are taught here in this passage that God has sent Jesus to restore your spiritual vision, to restore you to your God-given calling.

I want to just break that down this morning by asking you three questions right from the text. I think the text will answer these three questions.

- I. The first one I take from verses 1 through 3: Do you see Jesus in your suffering?

Zack Eswine in Spurgeon's Sorrows tells the account of Spurgeon's early ministry as a young man entering into ministry. He tells it right up front in the first chapter of the book. I was really moved by this account. Spurgeon, obviously amazingly gifted as a communicator of the gospel, pastored

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thousands at a very young age. When he was 21, thousands of people were coming to hear him. He began his public ministry, he got married, and nine months later he and his wife had twin boys. They had a new home and they were moving into this home -- 10 months into marriage, two babies, brand new in ministry, thousands of people coming to hear him and coming to be a part of the church. And while he was preaching on a given Sunday morning, a prankster yelled out, "Fire!" and in the following rush to exit the building, seven people were killed and 28 people were seriously injured.

Spurgeon went into a season of depression. He struggled with depression his entire life in ministry. The darkness for him - just imagine this young man, newly married, infants, still moving into this new place, trying to find some understanding on why this happened. You can just imagine the difficulty of it. The newspapers began to publish accusations against Spurgeon, blaming him for the accident, saying that his ambition, his carelessness, his leadership contributed to this catastrophe. His wife later said of Spurgeon during this season that she wondered if he would lose his sanity and if he would ever preach again.

You see, some things happen in our lives in such a way that...well, we would say that all suffering is difficult, but some trials just define us. They alter us. They impact us so deeply we don't know if we will recover. You know, these things shouldn't happen at church.

We probably all heard about the family who tragically, at Disney World, on vacation, lost their toddler to an alligator. At Disney World! On vacation! In a place where you are there to build joyous family memories. Then of course, now in our day with social media, the parents are then questioned and blamed. Were they careless? Were they responsible for this terrible tragedy? I'm thinking, "Wow, how do you recover from that kind of devastation, seeing that, experiencing that, then being blamed for it?"

Sometimes where things happen, how things happen, or just the seriousness of it -- they have a way of just marking us. I suspect that this man's blindness - obviously it was defining for him. He lived in a day where there was little to help him, and he was a beggar. What you see immediately as we are told the account is the disciples asking questions, trying to figure it out, and really misunderstanding what's going on. I think that is pretty common for us. We see suffering, we experience suffering, and we don't get it.

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So they ask Jesus this question: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?” There was this understanding, this thinking that if there is that kind of suffering, someone is to blame. But this is difficult, because if his parents sinned, that seems harsh that now he carries the penalty of that for 40 years, in blindness. But if he sinned, how did he sin in his mother’s womb?

Interestingly enough, there were rabbis who actually taught that children did sin in their mother’s womb. I don’t have a theological opinion, although I would say children sin very early. That would be my experience and professional opinion. They would make an argument like, “Look at Jacob and Esau. God chose Jacob, but Esau was a bad guy. That was obvious in the womb and God judged him for his sin and chose Jacob.” Of course, the problem with that argument is that Jacob was not a good guy at all, if you know the biblical story of these famous twins.

But these kinds of theological debates took place. The disciples are kind of entering into the current theological debate of their day. One way the argument would be made is that God, foreknowing everything, would know the kind of life that you would live, and that the infant in the womb was judged for something he was yet to do. It’s kind of like, if you can imagine, someone goes along, they sin this great sin, God gets really angry and judges them and says, “That’s it. You’re going to be blind. But that’s not enough. I’m going to make you blind from your birth.”

That’s a troubling view of God, I would suggest. But these were the kinds of theological debates that were taking place, and they demonstrate just how we don’t understand suffering. We don’t know how to react. It doesn’t make sense to us. In fact, if you and I are honest, we would look and say, “When things are not going well for me just in general, God feels distant. And I’m prone to make that association.”

Well, Jesus teaches here that actually this man was to display the work of God. I believe that Jesus is showing us and teaching us that this is our main purpose in life, and that even suffering, even trials and tragedy and things that are really just not desirable whatsoever have a purpose in God, so that God might show himself -- that we might know God and have a relationship with God and enjoy God and glorify God and experience his glory and display his glory. And that God uses suffering toward that end. He doesn’t always display his work by healing us in the moment. But sometimes he does. It helps us to see that this whole idea of knowing God and living for his glory is so massive, so transformative, that God, who doesn’t want to see us suffer, is willing to allow that and to govern it in a way to bring us to this greater end and greater purpose.

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Scripture teaches that your joy and peace is not contained or sustained in your personal comfort, but in the simple reality of knowing and experiencing the glory of God. When you see that, it serves to detach you from the love of the things of this world. It brings a freedom, so that we can say, "Listen, what I really need in this moment is: Yes, I'm asking God to do this. I'm believing God to do this. I'm praying that I will experience God's mercy here and God's grace in this way. That's normal and that's right and God delights in doing that, but that I don't make those things God in my life, I make God God in my life and submit to him as I pray for these things, believing that I will experience God's glory regardless, and therefore know tremendous joy."

Just a supporting text right here from John -- we'll see a great miracle in Chapter 11 where Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead after several days. John 11:4: "...When Jesus heard it he said, 'This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.'" This is a similar preface to the raising of Lazarus from the dead, which we'll look at when we get to Chapter 11. Do you see Jesus in your suffering?

### II. Do you see Jesus as your healer? Verses 4-9.

We might say it this way: Do you see Jesus alone as your healer? In these verses, Jesus begins in verses 4 and 5 by stating that he has work to do. He must do the works that the Father has sent him to do. "...night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." The reference there to "night" is certainly a reference to the cross. Jesus is again bringing in this picture that when he is crucified, no one will work. It will be a moment of darkness where it will certainly seem that darkness reigns supreme. "But right now, in this moment, I'm here," Jesus is saying. "I am the light of the world and I have work to do."

There is this keen awareness of the mission that the Father has for him. That's a good prompt for you and me. Are you aware in this season of the opportunity that's before you to minister, to be God's light? In Matthew 5:14-16, now we are the light of the world. We are the body of Christ. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

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You see, in both of these passages, in Matthew Chapter 5 and in John Chapter 9, Jesus is giving us just a little bit of logic or reasoning as it relates to light. He is saying, "Listen, I have a season where I have work to do and it's illogical for me not to be obedient right now because my moment of crucifixion is coming." But to us he uses similar logic and says, "Listen, you are the light of the world! It's unnatural for that light to be hidden. Let your light shine! Let your works be seen, that God will be glorified and that others will see and believe."

So Jesus performs this great miracle. He does something quite unusual. He spits in the dust. He makes mud. He anoints the man's eyes, and he sends him to the pool of Siloam. John tells us that that word means "Sent." He sends the man to the pool called "Sent," and I believe the significance of that is that Jesus is showing that he, himself, is the "Sent One." He has been sent by the Father to rescue us, to bring healing, to give sight to the blind.

The man is transformed. He comes back seeing, then this kind of comical interchange takes place. His neighbors don't recognize him. The transformation, having encountered Christ, experiencing Christ's healing, is so dramatic that now they don't recognize him and they go into an argument. "Is he the man? Is he not the man?" The man is going around repeatedly saying, "I am the man. I am the man! It's me. It's really me!"

The recent movie *Miracles from Heaven* with Jennifer Garner tells the story of a little girl who gets an illness and is going to die. It has a scene as the little girl is getting sicker and sicker where some individuals come up to the mom at church and they basically blame her for the little girl's illness. It's a bit of a caricature. By that, I mean that I think the dialog presented in the movie lacks a little nuance and the complexities of relationship, but nonetheless, it's accurate. These things happen. Supposedly the movie is a true story. I don't doubt that it happened. So this poor mom is standing there dealing with individuals blaming her for her daughter's sickness.

Then, SPOILER ALERT: There is no hope for the little girl, no cure. She is home one day. She is out playing with her sister. They are up in this tree that's largely rotted out and she falls into the middle of the tree. They can't get her out. She is unconscious. The paramedics come and they are trying to get her out. The firemen are trying to get her out. The news stations come. The media is there. It's a horrible moment where I would think as a mom or a dad, you would be thinking, "Boy, I've got this terminally ill daughter. She is up in a tree. She falls. I look like a terrible parent. Is she even alive? Where did I go wrong?" All of those things. Then, you discover afterward as the movie

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finishes, that the fall that should have killed her actually cures her. She hits her head and neurologically is set back in balance. Then, of course, the individuals who blame the mom afterwards don't believe the miracle. Their response is, "Well, she probably wasn't that sick to start with."

"I am the man!" It's just unbelievable - the transformation that Christ can bring. You see, what happens in this man's life is God helps him. Jesus helps him then he saves him. I don't think the man really gets saved until the end of the chapter. You will see that in the dialog that follows. Often, we are in a moment of tragedy. God meets us. God helps us. He uses his people to do that. But we still don't see. We still don't see Jesus. This man comes to spiritual understanding only later as he comes to understand who Jesus is, but the healing demonstrates Jesus' magnificence.

Think about, just for a moment, the seven signs that we have seen in the book of John. John's gospel is divided into two parts. The first 12 chapters is the book of signs, if you will -- seven miracles, seven signs that teach us about Jesus. The second half of the book is the passion narrative of the story of the cross. Of these seven signs, we have now seen six of them. Let me just remind you:

- Changing the water into wine
- Healing of the official's son
- Healing of the lame man
- Feeding of the 5000
- Walking on water
- Now healing the man born blind
- Then the last one to come is raising Lazarus from the dead

So this is the sixth of the seven signs. Signs six and seven are particularly spectacular. When the blind man who gets healed gets into a debate with the Pharisees, his reasoning is very simple. He goes, "Listen, we have never ever heard of anyone being healed of blindness." If you look at the Old Testament you just don't find that miracle. He is saying, "How can you say that this man who healed me is not from God? Who heals the blind?"

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Then the seventh sign, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, is quite spectacular after he has been dead for several days. But when you look at the seven miracles, only three of them, really, are healing miracles. Of course, raising Lazarus from the dead would be a dramatic healing, wouldn't it? But I would put it in a different category.

What is John trying to teach you? Jesus walks on water. He feeds thousands. He heals the lame man. He heals a child, your child in a sense - the official's child. There is a perfect orchestration of signs where John is teaching us that nothing is too difficult for God. Nothing is impossible for him. It's not just an accumulation of a bunch of supernatural things. It is a presentation of the spectacular to put faith in your heart. Nothing is too difficult for God.

If you think about it, when we find ourselves in a trial, these objections pop up. You know: "Lord, my child needs help, but can you really help him? Can you really change his heart?" Yes, nothing is too difficult for God. "Yeah, but Lord, have you seen him? Have you seen her?" No, nothing is too difficult for God. We have these ways of just bringing unbelief into the conversation. John is helping us see that Jesus brings transformation. He alone can heal.

There was a point of just a little venture into Miracles from Heaven. The very thing that she thought might have killed her daughter, God used to raise her up. Sometimes God works in our lives in such a way that we see that this could only be God. There is no other explanation. Jesus alone is the one who heals and restores.

III. Do you see more of Jesus today than you did yesterday? Verses 10-12.

Here is where we get that question from. The neighbors, the friends, the people are asking the blind man about what has happened, once they finally accept that he is the one. They say, "Then how were your eyes opened?" So the man gives a little bit of a recounting of the miracle. He tells them the story: "He put mud on my eyes. He told me to go to the pool of Siloam. He sent me there. I washed. I received my sight." Then they said to him, "Well, where is he?" And he doesn't know. He really knows very little about Jesus at this point. Then he begins a journey where throughout the chapter -- at first he says Jesus is a prophet, but by the time the chapter ends, he is worshipping Jesus and telling the religious leaders that they should believe in him. And Jesus comes back, finds the man, introduces himself, and he confesses his personal faith in Jesus Christ.

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Often, there is a way that God deals with us in life. Pastor Garland had a sermon which I heard on this 20 years ago. It has always stayed with me. He talked about how God does something to us before he gives us the understanding. Garland would tell the story, "You know, I go into the tailor to get a suit and the tailor tells me, 'Well, you should have a suit with three buttons, not two buttons, because two buttons are out.'" And he says, "Well, I didn't even know that three button suits existed at the time. Then I leave the tailor and everywhere I go I see three button suits. Wow - they're everywhere!"

You see this, where you don't even know about something, then you are told about it, then you see it everywhere. Because of our spiritual blindness, sometimes our eyes aren't open until God dramatically moves in our lives. At that point, our eyes begin to open, but we really don't have understanding. I'm wanting you, friend, to have faith that the circumstances you are going through right now that don't seem to make sense are God opening your eyes, and that the spiritual blindness...now let me just take you through the whole message. Hopefully it will come together here.

Spiritual blindness is this: I think life is about me. I think life is about my comfort. I think life is about my glory. I'm spiritually blind. Life is about Jesus. Life is about God. Life is about knowing him. Life is about his glory. But you can't just tell me that. I mean, if you just give me a few words - Boom! I'd snap out of it! But I'm blind! I can't see it! You can tell it to me, but I can't see it.

Spiritually blind. It's like the blind spot in your car. I've used that analogy before. You're going along. You are going to change lanes. You go to change and you don't see the car that's in your blind spot. So what do they do? They honk at you. God orchestrates honks in your life all the time. And you are like, "I can't get anything done! Because this is broken, there's this trial, and there's this, and there's another one on top of that." God is working in our lives to reveal spiritual blindness. Then what do we do? Jesus alone is the healer, but we try everything before we try Jesus. We often pray as a last resort! "It's hopeless, let me go to Jesus."

God opens our eyes, often working through circumstances, which leads us to the question of: Are you seeing more of Jesus today than you did yesterday? Are you now beginning to understand that God is at work in these circumstances? God is Lord of all of this. It's not just some random mess. He is at work in my life. And the very things that I want him to not allow, maybe he'll take them. Let's pray he will. But he is using them right now.

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John Newton would say that trials are either medicine or appointments. They are either God's medicine to heal, to discipline, to train, to equip, or they are appointments to experience and display God's glory. Of course, they can be both at the same time. He had this little quote that he liked. Let me give it to you. He used to say this: All shall work together for good. Everything is needful that he sends. Nothing can be needful that he withholds." Tim Keller calls this an ocean of biblical theology in a thimble, and he breaks it down this way. He simplifies it. "Everything is necessary that God sends. Nothing can be necessary that he withholds."

By the time we get to the end of John Chapter 9 you are going to see the seriousness of spiritual blindness, and that Jesus is indeed the only cure, which humbles us to a response to come to Jesus -- to say, "Okay, Lord, I'm going to accept your leadership of my life. I'm going to 1 Peter 5: Humble myself under the mighty hand of God and in due season he will exalt. I'm going to accept how God leads, believing that in time it will all make sense."

You know Joseph's story in the bible? You remember the story of Joseph? He was sold into slavery by his brothers, betrayed by his family. There he is placed in Potiphar's house in Egypt. He faithfully, loyally serves. He honors God. He resists sexual temptation. And what does he get for that? He is accused of raping Potiphar's wife. He gets thrown into prison. He excels in prison. He does good deeds, but he is soon forgotten in prison -- just betrayal, forgotten, trial after trial after trial. When it's all over, God positions him in leadership in Egypt, where he is able to save thousands and thousands and thousands of lives, including the lives of his brothers who betrayed him in the beginning. And when they stand before him in Genesis 50:20, he says, "You meant it for evil, but God used it for good." "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." God governs those circumstances in your life.

Do you remember the fox with three feet? The fox was actually owned by a furrier and was to end up on the coat rack. This particular malady of being born without a foot saved him from being killed for his fur. I thought that was interesting -- just a picture of how God will use in our lives trial, tragedy, brokenness to open our eyes to see our need for healing, to save us. From what? Eternal death. Can you see Jesus?

Let's pray.