

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN? | RED LETTER TALKS PART 2

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Right now I want to welcome everybody across all of our locations, those of you in additional seating, those of you tuning in online, all of you spring breakers—man, we are glad to have you with us today.

If you have a Bible, and I hope you brought one with you today, go ahead and grab it and turn to John, chapter 9. John, chapter 9 is our passage today.

We are in a series of messages where we are looking at the words of Jesus in the gospel of John leading up to Easter weekend. And we're calling it Red Letter Talks because if you have a red-letter edition Bible everything in red are the words of Jesus.

And there was an alternative title to this message series that we thought about going with that I really, really liked as well just simply called: Encounters with Jesus. And that's really what this is about. When you have an encounter with Jesus, man, you never stay the same.

One of the things that I have been praying for you throughout this whole series and this last week in message prep, is that regardless of who you are or what you walked in here with, that you would have an encounter with Him. We want you to come ready, we want you to lean in, we want you to expect to have an encounter with God, because the Holy Spirit is in this room right now. Does anybody believe that?

The Holy Spirit is here as we are gathered. So, if God is here, then that means that He's got a word for you. In fact, I just want you to take a few quick seconds right before we dive into the passage and simply pray this prayer: God, what is it that You want me to hear and receive today from this message?

I'm going to be plowing through a whole bunch of verses in John, chapter 9. And the Bible describes itself as living and active, sharper than a doubled edged sword. So, the Bible is able to penetrate. God has a word for you from His Word. And the Holy Spirit's work in everybody's life is tailor made, which means He knows who you are, He knows what you are struggling with, He knows what you need. He will tailor make the message just for you.

A wild thing—same sermon, people have different take aways. It's the craziest thing. In 35 years of preaching, I never get used to it. I'll have somebody come up to me and say, "Man, that thing you said just really spoke to me." And somebody else says, "This thing over here." Some people say things to me that I didn't even say. It's because the Holy



Spirit takes God's Word and He brings it to life. So, God has a word for you, and I want you to think about that. Alright?

So, last week we left off with Jesus standing in front of a woman who had been humiliated and embarrassed publicly due to the private sin in her life. That's typically how it works. Eventually our private sin catches up to us publicly. And Jesus doesn't condone her behavior, but He also doesn't condemn her.

And, man, that is just not the world we live in, is it? We live in a world that is zero- sum. It's either or. You either condemn or you condone. You either hate or you love. You accept or you reject. You agree or you disagree.

But not in the kingdom of King Jesus. The kingdom of Jesus is not 50/50 truth and grace. It's not where the truth goes up and the grace goes down or the grace goes up and the truth goes down. It is full on grace and full-on truth. And you don't let go of either one.

So, man, don't underestimate the importance of truth no matter how much it stings when you hear or receive it. And also, don't take advantage of the grace that Jesus gives you because He still went to a cross and paid the price to make that grace available to you.

So, we got to verse 11 of chapter 8 last week and when you read the rest of chapter 8 you'll see these words a lot—hear them over and over again: But Jesus said, Jesus spoke, Jesus answered, Jesus replied. So, Jesus is talking all through chapter 8. If you put a label on chapter 8, you might label it: The Lecture. And as we come to chapter 9, if you were to give it a label, you would label it: The Lab.

Jesus is going to meet a man who has been blind since birth and in the passage we're going to read here in a minute, the guy gets his physical sight. Jesus heals him and gives him sight in an instant. His spiritual sight gradually comes online, kind of like a dimmer switch. And ironically at the exact same time, the religious elite seem to be getting more and more blind to the Jesus who is right in front of them.

At the beginning of chapter 8 in our text last week, the religious leaders had rocks in their hands. They wanted to throw them at this adulterous woman. And they all dropped the rocks. Well, apparently by the end of chapter 8 they pick them up again, because now they want to stone Jesus. And it says that Jesus pulled a Houdini and just slipped away in the crowd.

That's where we pick it up in chapter 9, verse 1. Follow along with me. It says:

"As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth." (NLT)

Now, I don't know about you guys, but I don't enjoy confrontational conversations. I don't think many of us do. There are a few who like it, but not all of us. And, I don't know about



you, if you think about the last hard conversation you got in to—whether it was with your spouse or a coworker or a neighbor—some of you got into a tense disagreement to the point where your skin is flushing, your pulse is pounding, and your palms are sweaty. It's intense. It's like all of a sudden you go into fight or flight.

Now, I've been in several of those conversations. I don't enjoy it. But I have never, ever gotten in so much to the point that somebody picked up a rock and wanted to throw it at me. And that's the position that Jesus is in at the end of chapter 8. I'm telling you this because as He is walking away from that, you know that His heart would have been beating, His palms would have been sweaty, He's in fight or flight.

And in that moment He sees a man. He's not preoccupied. He's not just thinking about His own problems. He's thinking about somebody else. And for those of us who have every second of our day planned out, we are so connected to our Outlook calendars, that's a good reminder for us that we are never too busy to see the people that God places right in front of us, because God often works in and through the interruptions.

Here's what we know about this guy. This guy was an adult. He was an outcast. He had been blind since birth. He never had sight. He has likely reduced himself to a lifestyle of begging. He was totally dependent upon other people, and he has never been able to see. He's been invisible to everybody.

But Jesus sees him. And His disciples are with Him, and they notice him too. So, they asked this question:

"‘Rabbi,’ his disciples asked him, ‘why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?’" John 9:2 (NLT)

Now, what the disciples are doing reveals that they had kind of fallen into a very common Jewish belief during the day that if somebody was experiencing some sort of pain, suffering, or a calamity that it was the direct result of some great sin in his life. And, honestly, that doesn't sound all that different from what I hear from many people today, even people who call themselves Christians.

What's happened is this thing called syncretism where we synchronize something called karma and mix it with theology. So, karma says this: you do good, the universe will reward you with good. You do bad, the universe will get you back with bad. The Christian version of syncretism is you swap out universe for God.

And there are all kinds of problems with that. So, it's this idea of, "Well, if I do good then God owes me with something good." And some of us are kind of holding that over God. That's really bad theology because, honestly, God doesn't owe you and me anything. He's already given us enough. At the end of the day, He gave everything for you and me. So, that thinking is majorly flawed. We're like, "Well, I did this good thing, God. I served at the church, so now You've got to scratch my back." Man, that is bad theology.

Same thing is true on the other side, “If I do something bad, then God is up there with lasers or something. He’s going to zap you. He’s going to get you back.” Guys, karma is not good theology. God is not paying us back for the sins that we commit because He is a just God, and those sins have already been paid for by Jesus on a cross.

Now, are there consequences to our sin that may be painful? You bet. But there is a difference between consequences and God getting you back. Colossians, chapter 2, verse 14 says He cancelled the record and the charges against us. He took them away nailing them to the cross.

And Jesus just immediately dismisses this notion as well. Look at what it says in verse 3. He says:

“‘It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,’ Jesus answered. ‘This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.’” (NLT)

Now, one of the things that I love about Jesus is He doesn’t answer the question we are often asking because it’s the wrong question. And Jesus didn’t say to the disciples, “Man, I don’t know why he is blind. It’s just kind of random—dumb luck. We live in a broken world.” No, no, no. He didn’t say any of that. He seems to indicate that He is aware of this guy’s pain. He’s aware of the ailment.

And He said, “This isn’t payback for some sin.” This happened as an opportunity for God’s power to be displayed through the pain. In other words, He doesn’t speak to what caused the pain, but what God’s purpose could be in the pain.

And it reminds me of something Paul said in 2 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 9 where he talks about this ailment that he had. He called it a thorn in his flesh. He never specifically says what it is. We don’t know if it was a physical, emotional, or spiritual thing. It could have been a combination of all three. But whatever it was, Paul prayed, and he begged God to take it away three different times. And look at God’s response to him in the passage. He says:

“‘Each time he said, ‘My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.’”

So, Paul’s conclusion was:

“So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.” (NLT)

Man, it’s one thing to talk about this theoretically, it’s another thing to talk about this practically, because I know for a fact right now that many of you are just going through it. And I’m not even guessing that. I’m saying that because I’ve heard from you.

After and between services right down front over the last several weeks, I’ve prayed with literally dozens and dozens and dozens of people. And I’ve prayed right here down front for people who have brain tumors, fourth stage cancer, they’ve gone through some sort

of freak accident and there is an element of physical pain with that, divorce, affairs, financial stress—you name it. It is the stark reality of just the fact that we've got people who are suffering here right now.

And in those moments, it doesn't help to just look and say, "Well, you know, when God hands you lemons you make lemonade." It's like, "No." You hear, and you sit with them and grieve with them, and you wish it wouldn't have happened. And you don't know why it happened. And as we pray, we say, "God, we don't always know the cause, but would You help us to see Your purpose in the pain?"

Some of you, maybe you're going through the chronological Bible reading plan right now and we are just coming through the book of Judges. There was a judge by the name of Gideon. And he's kind of hiding out. And I love how God approaches him. God walks in and He says, "Mighty hero. The Lord is with you."

Man, if God approached me that way, and He said, "Mighty hero. Aaron the Lord is with you," I'd be like, "Man, God called me a mighty hero. That's awesome." Not Gideon. Maybe you can relate to Gideon's response. Gideon said this, "If the Lord is with me, why is all of this happening?"

Maybe that's exactly where some of you are. I don't know the answer to all of that. And I know that every time I'm down here and I'm praying with somebody who is going through it, man, I pray with as much faith that I can muster, "God, would You please take the pain away. God, would You please deliver them? God, would please intervene?"

And then I've got to always say, "But, God, you don't owe us anything. Whatever You do with this, we give You glory. Whatever You do with this, can You help us see that Your power is on display."

That's what Jesus is saying. And then He says in verse 4:

"We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us."

Why is Jesus talking that way? We and Us. It's because He's talking about the Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And He says:

"The night is coming, and then no one can work. But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:4-5 (NLT)

So, this is mission talk. This is kind of a weird place for Jesus to bring that all up. No, it's really not because of what He is getting ready to do. And oftentimes when Jesus would do a miracle, He would do this. Before the miracle or after the miracle, He would tie it to and remind everybody of His identity and what He had come to do. So, it's like, "Man, I'm here on mission. I'm not just here to do party tricks, which is oftentimes what we end up resorting miracles to.

So, He's tying the miracle to the mission and now He's going to do the miracle. And it's really weird. Look at verse 6:

"Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes."

What? Are you in junior high? And:

"He told him, 'Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam' (Siloam means "sent")." That's really important. Hold on to that.

"So the man went and washed and came back seeing!" (NLT)

Man, this is wild. Think about this for a minute. Visualize yourself on the street with Jesus and the disciples and this blind man. And this guy is just there on the corner minding his own business, doing his thing just like he had done every day of his adult life. And he had never heard of Jesus, let alone was looking for Jesus. He certainly, never once, asked to be healed and to have his sight restored.

He's blind, but he can hear. So, all of a sudden he hears Jesus getting ready to spit, "What's going on here, man?" He hears something and then Jesus is making a mud pie and smearing it on his eyes, "Man, what is going on? Am I being punked?"

Can I just say this to somebody here today who really needs to hear this? Maybe you came in here today and you're not really looking for Jesus either. You're just kind of doing your thing. You came to church. You can't miss church because you're interested in a girl and she's into this.

Or maybe somebody invited you, so you came. And you're not really looking for Jesus. But I'm telling you, man, you don't have to be looking for Jesus. He's looking for you. And I don't think it is any accident that you are sitting here. I think it is God ordained that you are here, and you are listening to the sound of my voice and this teaching.

And Jesus has invaded and will invade the darkness of your world spiritual and otherwise and radically transform your life. It is what he does. "Well, I'm not asking for it." Neither was this guy.

Jesus didn't have to do it this way, did He? Jesus could have restored his sight by just saying the words. He did it in other places. One time, Jesus actually brought a guy back to life who had died. Jesus healed a little girl in another town without even going to physically meet her. And, by the way, He is God. He spoke the universe into existence by say it.

So, do you really think that He needed to make mud pies to heal the guy's eyes? No way. But He chose to do it this way. He chose to do something tangible and then He asks this guy to do something tangible as well as an act of obedience, "Go, wash in the pool known as sent."

And it was the obedience that enacted the healing. Obedience didn't cause the healing, but it enacted the healing.

And sometimes God will ask you to do something out of obedience that may not make sense to you. And it's not the thing that will actually deliver you, it's the fact that you had to have faith and obedience to do the thing that He is asking.

So, I want you to understand this. We are not here to draw crowds. We are not even here to make converts. We are here to make disciples who make disciples. And one of my favorite definitions of a disciple is: whatever your next step of obedience is, you take it. "God, the answer is yes. Now, what's the question?"

Can I just ask you right now, what's your next step of obedience? This doesn't make any sense to this blind guy. He's got mud saliva smeared in his eyes. He's going to go wash in the Pool of Siloam, "What are you talking about?" And yet he was willing to obey. What's God asking you to do that maybe you don't want to do? Or maybe this doesn't make sense to you.

Can I just tell you this? After last week's teaching I got so much feedback, so much response, so many emails, so many DMs, and it was all good, by the way. It was a good week. I said some hard things last week. And I had people reach out to me and say, "You know, when you started to go where I knew you were going, I thought to myself, 'You know what? Man, I don't have any struggle in this particular area of my life.'"

We were talking about sex and sexuality. "I used to, but by God's grace I finally got it under control. So, man, this is going to be great for other people to hear. And by the end of the message, Pastor, the Holy Spirit had revealed some things to me in my life that I was blind to, and I knew I needed to take a step of obedience."

I had a couple come up to me right after the service and say, "Man, thank you for saying what you said. We've got a big enough house. We've got an extra room. If there are any couples living together and they want to do this God's way, we'll open up a room in our house so they can move in, rent free, with us."

I had multiple couples from various campuses all reach out and say, "We felt so convicted. We've been living together. We weren't even enjoying intimacy. And then you preached that message, and God revealed some things to us. We needed to take our next step of obedience."

Guys, I can think of several couples who made a decision by Wednesday to move out and do this God's way.

Now, what about you? What about you? Maybe for you, your next step is baptism. You've been kicking the can down the road on that. You've not been doing it because you're like, "Man, I don't want to get wet in front of people—seems weird." But you know what? So does Jesus putting mud in a guy's eyes.



"You know what? Maybe my next step is I need to man my station and serve someplace. Because, you know what? I've been the recipient of other people's sacrifice and generosity. I've grown in this church," and now you need to reinvest in this church.

Some of you, you've given God everything except your pocketbook. You will not trust Him with your first and best in your life. What's your next step of obedience? Do the tangible thing.

Well, the rest of the chapter is populated with conversations and questions that people had about what had happened to this guy, beginning with the neighbors. Look at verse 8:

"His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said he was, and others said, 'No, he just looks like him!'" John 9:8-9 (NLT)

That is crazy, man. The neighbors—these are people he'd grown up with—these are his high school classmates. These are his college roommates, his frat house, whatever.

Any of you ever travel back to your hometown and you meet people you went to high school with five, 10, 15, 20 years ago. And you've grown up, but they haven't. Yeah.

Or maybe they are still stuck back in whatever year, and they keep talking to you. Maybe you were known as the jock or the class clown or the smart kid and they still see you that way. And you are like, "Guys, I've kind of grown up. I have a family now. I've got a big boy job, or "A big girl job." But they keep talking to you like you were back then.

That's what they are doing, "This was a blind guy, and we just can't actually believe that his life has been changed or that he's been healed." So, what they are doing is they are just like, "Well, I don't actually think it's him. I think he has a dopplegänger."

Have you noticed that sometimes it takes more faith to not have faith in the thing you should have faith in?

And the beggar didn't just say, he kept saying. Meaning he had to say it more than once:

"Yes, I am the same one!" John 9:9 (NLT)

Two things that I want you to see here... Listen, man:

When Jesus opens your eyes, it should open your mouth.

When Jesus opens your eyes, you need to testify, you need to say it plainly and clearly what He has done to change your life. Man, don't soften it the way that we often do.

When somebody walks up to you and you are like, "Man, you used to be this way and now you're that way. What has happened in your life?"

Don't just be like, "Well, you know I've just been going back to church more." "I'm just trying to get more spiritual, trying to get my life right, trying to figure the best version of me."

Man, don't rob God of His glory. No. You say, "Man, let me tell you about this man named Jesus who radically invaded my darkness and threw light into my world." When Jesus gives you sight, you cannot not talk about what He's done for you.

For some of you you are like, "I'm a little bit offended that you would say it like that. Aaron, do you have a passage to back that up?" As a matter of fact, I do. You didn't think I would say that without having one. Look at what Jesus says Himself in Matthew, chapter 10. He goes:

"Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth," In other words, you're not just keeping it to yourself, you're actually saying it for others to hear, "I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven."

Man, I love that visual. The Bible tells us that Jesus, right now, is at the right hand of God the Father, He's advocating on the behalf of those who are redeemed. If your life is hidden in Christ, then Jesus is your advocate before God the Father. What does that mean? So, when you in an act of courage or clarity speak boldly the name of Jesus, Jesus notices that and elbows God and says, "Hey, man. Did you see that? That's my boy." "That's my girl." "They are being courageous right now. They're unapologetically linked to My name. They are ours."

This next verse sends shivers down my spine:

"But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven." Matthew 10:32-33 (NLT)

And that's not just saying you don't believe in Jesus. That's, "I believe in You Jesus," and not saying anything. So, are you tentative about talking about it? Fearful of what others might think or assume about you? "Oh, you're one of those born agains." "Oh, you're one of those evangelicals. We know all about you," and you're afraid that your reputation is going to take a beating over this. Listen, man. Jesus took a few nails for you. Your reputation can take a few shots for Him. So, when Jesus opens your eyes, it will open your mouth.

Listen. Here's the other thing:

When Jesus opens your eyes, you see your true identity.

Man, identity is a big deal. Now a days everybody is looking for theirs and associating it with their giftedness, their career, their success, their tribe, their politics, their sexuality, their social status, and achievements. And just like we said last week, all of it falls flat.



Jesus set you free from all of that and He gives you the truth to assume your rightful identity as a son or a daughter of the King. Nobody has a right to tell you who you are but Jesus and Jesus alone. And He reminds you, because of the cross, you fight from victory not for it.

Well, they are not finished. Look at verse 10:

“They asked, ‘Who healed you? What happened?’” (NLT)

Now, would you not agree that there is a way to ask questions out of genuine curiosity to know? And then there is a way to ask questions in a way to undermine somebody else’s faith or experience.

They are not asking questions out of genuine curiosity. They are asking questions to undermine his faith.

And that’s going to happen. In this cultural moment that we find ourselves in, there are going to be people who will ask questions in such a way to try to trip you up and to undermine your faith.

Peter said in 1 Peter, chapter 3, verse 15, maybe some of you know this verse, “Always be ready to give a reason for the hope that you have.” And if you know that verse then you probably know the rest of it, “but do this with gentleness and respect.”

Now, here’s what I want to say. Oftentimes we take that gentleness and respect part, and we think, “Well, I just need to be nice and not say anything.” That’s not what that means. We are in a war right now, not a cultural war, we are in a war with the principalities and powers of darkness in this world. You have an enemy. He fights dirty.

His number one question in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve was this, “Did God really say?” So, he will try to twist God’s Word and then he’ll ask questions in such a way that undermines your faith. And what I’m trying to do every single week (I just want you to know this) is I’m trying to teach you from the Word about how to read the Word so that you can understand the Word so that you can obey the Word and apply the Word.

A good sermon is, “Wow, that held my attention the whole time.” Man, that is lowering the bar way down. That’s not a good sermon. That’s just an interesting talk. A good sermon isn’t, “Man, that preacher was just so funny. That story, I’ll never forget it.” Man, if you remember my illustrations more than the content of the Word, I’ve failed. A good sermon is like, “Wow, that preacher is so smart. He confused me so much I don’t have to do anything with what I just heard.” That’s not a good sermon.

A good sermon is where I walk you through the Word and I read it and I explain it and I apply it so that you know how to obey it, therefore you know how to contend for the faith. I actually want you listening to my preaching and at the end of our passage when we get through it, you go, “Huh, that’s not as complicated as what I thought. I think I

could read the Bible on my own. I think I could apply that to my own life. I think I could contend for that.”

And did you know that that is actually the word that Jude uses in his book when he’s writing this. Jude says, “You need to know God’s words so that you can defend the faith that God has entrusted to you His people.”

Why is that such a bit deal? Well, on Thursday as I was putting the polishing touches on my message, I opened up my iPad and I ask AI this question right here: If you were the devil, how would you sow seeds of confusion among Christian’s within the local church? Here is the response that AI gave back to me: I’d gradually blur the line between cultural values and biblical principles until they become indistinguishable.

Yeah, that’s not just artificial intelligence. That’s human conniving. That’s the cultural moment in which we live. You’ve heard me talk about this before. It’s the dual errors of separatism and synchronism. We are not called to be separate from this world because Jesus has left us in the world as salt and light to fulfill His mission. So, we’ve got to go. We’ve got to intermingle. And yet at the same time, the other dual error is synchronism where we take cultural values, and we mix them with biblical principles to the point where they are indistinguishable.

Guys, you’ve got to know the Word so that you can see the lies. So, Jude says this in his chapter. He says:

“I say,” talking about contending for the faith, “this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God’s marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives.” Jude 1:4 (NLT)

That’s the tension that we were talking about last week. And so you’ve got to know it when you see it and then you’ve got to contend for the faith. That word contend is like a boxing term. That word contend is a competing term. It’s where you are like, “Oh, I could do this with gentleness and respect, but it doesn’t mean that I roll over. That means that I contend for the faith.”

So, the Bible says this, “Beware of wolves.” Understand the analogy that Scriptures use for us. The church, the gathering of the saints, we are sheep. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, then there are under-shepherds known as pastors of those congregations and then there are the sheep.

He says beware of wolves. So, who is the wolf? Well, a wolf is anybody who misrepresents God’s words. It’s a false teacher. And most of the time we think of false teachers as pastors or televangelists or health and wealth people or whatever. And certainly they can be wolves.

But if you notice in the Scripture it says, “Beware of wolves in,” what clothing? “sheep’s clothing.” It doesn’t say, “Beware of wolves in shepherd’s clothing.” Why? Well, because wolves can be among the sheep.

Well, who is that? That’s people in your small group or Christian coworkers. People who will say... Here’s what that sounds like, “Well, I know what the pastor/shepherd said about God’s word on Sunday, but I really disagree with it. I think he needs to get with the times.” And so, they begin to undermine. It’s called reverse discipleship and confusion. You’ve got to know God’s Word and the application of it so that you can contend for the faith.

And, man, if you get peppered with questions, likely you’re going to go, “Man, I don’t feel equipped to contend.” That’s okay. Neither was this guy. But he still did it. Look at verse 11:

“He told them, ‘The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, “Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.” So I went and washed, and now I can see!’” (NLT)

There was no mention of the Mosaic law, he’s not talking about doctrine, he’s not talking about theology just yet. He’s just telling them what he experienced. And they go:

“‘Where is he now?’ they asked. ‘I don’t know,’ he replied.” John 9:11-12 (NLT)

I love this conversation because there is really nothing over scholarly about it or anything like the depths of theology. Here’s essentially what he’s saying, “Guys, I don’t know what you are talking about with all of the other stuff, I just know this. Jesus did a thing. Jesus did a thing. I was blind and now I can see.”

And if people come to you and are like, “Man, how did you overcome that? What is different about you?” You may not be able to contend theologically just yet, maybe eventually. You can say this, “Man, I met a man named Jesus and He did a thing.” Man, that is encounter language. Look at verse 13. It says:

“Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him.” John 9:13-14 (NLT)

By the way, I think this is the reason why Jesus did it the way that He did it. Because if He would have just spoken it, and the guy would have gotten his sight, that wouldn’t necessarily be considered work on the Sabbath. But Jesus is picking a fight with the Pharisees. I love Jesus so much.

He’s like, “You know what? I’m going to hawk a loogie on the Sabbath. That’s what I’m going to do. And I’m going to tick the Pharisees off because He knew that doing it this way would get Him accused of this. And He’s showing these religious leaders that they were growing more, and more, and more blind. Verse 15:

“The Pharisees asked the man all about it.” So now it’s their turn to interrogate him. “So, he told them,” He’s getting really good at this sermon by the way, “He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!” Some of the Pharisees said, ‘This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.’ Others said, ‘But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?’ So, there was a deep division of opinion among them.” John 9:15-16 (NLT)

Don’t let this get lost on you. While lives are being healed and changed, the Pharisees are debating whether or not they should be healed and changed. They start arguing whether Jesus was allowed to do the thing that He’s already done. And they completely missed the miracle that was right in front of them.

And you know what? That happens all of the time now a days.

Can I just qualify what I’m going to say next by saying this? There is such a thing as emotionalism or emotional manipulation where you can kind of get drawn into an experience and your emotions get manipulated. Man, we are out on all of that.

However, an emotional experience is not the same thing as emotionalism. So, oftentimes you maybe come into a church like this, and you see Jesus moving in a mighty way and your cynical response is not to go, “Wow! Look at what Jesus did. He did a thing.” Your cynical response is to actually question it and say, “Wow, look at the crowd, you must be watering something down for all of these people to come here.”

Or “Why all the baptisms? Are they really being genuine?” “Oh, these people coming down front, they are just showboating.” If your natural response is to question it rather than to worship and say, “God is doing a thing,” man, be careful.

Well, in verse 17 the Pharisees begin questioning the man who had been blind and then demanded:

“What’s your opinion about this man who healed you?” That is the most important question you’ll ever be asked. What about you? What do you say? Or, what do you think about Jesus. “The man replied, ‘I think he must be a prophet.’” John 9:17 (NLT)

What I want you to notice here is that he’s not there yet, but he is consistently growing in faith. His physical eyesight was given to him in an instant, but his spiritual eyesight is gradually coming on line. And that’s oftentimes how it works.

Back in verse 11 when the neighbors asked him about Jesus he just said, “He’s a man.” Remember? When the Pharisees asked him he progresses to, “Well, He must be a prophet.” Something is gradually growing within him. And:

What if sharing our faith in Jesus is as much about growing our own faith than it is about helping someone else find theirs?

Don't underestimate that. When you share with others what Jesus has done in your life, then it's actually helping you grow in your understanding of faith, not just helping them find theirs.

And there is a lot at stake for this guy. From a blind beggar with no power and no authority and previously no sight, he is now standing up to the religious power brokers of his day saying that this man, Jesus, has changed my life. Man, that is a bold move. And:

When Jesus opens your eyes, it will embolden you to stand for and speak truth even if you're standing alone.

And oftentimes you will be.

So, Jesus is called a prophet now. And that really hacks off the leaders. They don't like this at all. They couldn't debunk this theologically, so they are set on disproving the miracle. So, they call in mom and dad. Verse 18:

"The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. They asked them, 'Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?'" (NLT)

Keep in mind this guy is like 35 years old. Mom and dad are coming out of the nursing home.

"His parents replied, 'We know this is our son and that he was born blind, but we don't know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him.'"

He's paying his own rent now. Just got off of our health insurance. Ask him.

"'He is old enough to speak for himself.' His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. That's why they said, 'He is old enough. Ask him.'" John 9:18-23 (NLT)

Translation, they were scared. In fact, they did not have the spiritual sight that their son had. They didn't have his faith.

Can I just say this to you? Secondhand encounters of faith are not enough to save you. You've got to have your own. You cannot live off of the recycled faith of grandma. Praise God for grandma, praise God that she was a godly woman and that she took you to Sunday school and that she prayed over you when you fell down. But her faith is not your faith. It's not getting you into heaven.

You cannot live off of the recycled faith of others. You cannot live off of the fact that you grew up Catholic or you grew up Baptist. You've got to have a faith encounter with Jesus that is your own. Verse 24 says:

“So, for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, ‘God should get the glory for this, because we know this man Jesus is a sinner.’” John 9:24 (NLT)

What a twisted statement. So, the theological debate didn’t work. The testimony of the parents didn’t take. Now they are going after character defamation and in verse 25 he says:

“‘I don’t know whether he is a sinner,’ the man replied. ‘But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!’” John 9:25 (NLT)

See, when the Pharisees interrogated him with theological questions his responses was (and this is perfectly okay, by the way) “I don’t know. I can go find out. Hey, we can go pursue that answer together. But I don’t know. I’m not going to get into this theological argument, debate, with you because that is silly nonsense. All I know is what I’ve experienced. Now, maybe we can go together and find out.”

This guy had no training. He had no degree. He hadn’t even been through Rooted. He didn’t have a good podcast to listen to. Some of us don’t know where we would be without our podcasts. Listen. You don’t have to know all of the answers as long as you’ve spent time with the Answer.

In Psalm 34, verse 8 it says:

“Taste and see that the LORD is good.” (NLT)

And when we encounter Jesus, man, it is always enough.

Now. Listen. I love good doctrine and theology. Give me a theology book written by a dead guy and a cup of coffee, I’m a happy camper all day. But can I say this? Those of you who are also doctrine and theology people, when it is devoid of an encounter with Jesus and a heart for people, it’s empty, it’s navel gazing.

So, my preaching hero is a guy by the name of Martin Lloyd-Jones. That name may not sound familiar to you. He does not have a podcast. He preached in London in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. He was this little five foot, nothing Welsh preacher with kind of a shrill, high-pitched voice—powerful preacher. And he, in my opinion, was like the filet minion of doctrinal preaching and teaching. He preached at West Minister Chapel during the Second World War

I have all of his books. His book Preachers and Preaching changed my life. I read it every year. It makes me cry every time. This is a guy who would spend 300 weeks in the book of Romans. He was the doctrine guy. And he never used any humor in his sermons. He never used any personal illustrations. He was just straight up teaching and preaching.



Several years ago, my wife and I went with a couple of other couples to England. We were on a tour, and we got to tour West Minister Chapel where he preached. And because it's a historical location, they haven't changed it all. So, I got to stand at his pulpit. And when nobody was looking I preached for a few minutes. It was awesome. And then I went into his study and his Bible that he preached out of was still in his study. I got to leaf through it.

But the highlight for me is when we went to Oxford where they set up lunch at a pub and they didn't tell me—it was a surprise. They had Martin Lloyd-Jones' daughter sitting at a table and we were going to have lunch with her. She was 84 years old at the time. I'm not quite sure if she is still alive. I walked in. I couldn't believe it. I was sitting across from her, my hero's daughter—the closest I'll ever get to him—and we were talking.

I've read his two-part volume biography. And I told her, "Hey, I read your dad's biography. I know everything about him. Tell me something that didn't make it in to the biography about your dad that you want me to know."

Immediately she had a story. She said, "Well, when my daughter," his granddaughter, "was 14 she hadn't yet made a profession of faith. And she was actually growing a little bit disenfranchised and bitter toward Jesus."

And I thought, "How can that be? Martin Lloyd-Jones' granddaughter? He's like the epitome, the filet minion, of doctrinal teaching and preaching, she should have accepted Christ when she was six months old."

"She sat under his preaching every single week and she was just growing more and more hard and distant. She was 14 and she was a big fan of soccer," which is football in England, "There was a big tournament coming through London and she really wanted to go, but it was on a Sunday, and I told her she couldn't go."

"She got really upset. And so I went to my dad," Martin Lloyd-Jones, "and I said, your granddaughter," we know how that works. Not my daughter, your granddaughter, "she is really upset with me because I wouldn't let her go." She was expecting him to say, "Hey, way to go. Way to be a good mom."

And instead, he sort of scolded her. He said, "What are you doing?" He was like, "She's in church every week. She listens to me preach every week. She's not yet made a profession of faith. She's actually growing a little bit hardened and distant to Jesus. Let her go to the tournament."

She couldn't believe that he was saying that. Honestly, when she told me that, I couldn't believe he said that, because he didn't have that reputation.

So, she said, "I went in and I told my daughter, 'Hey, granddad said that you could go to the tournament.' And my daughter was shocked." And she said, "Right then and there I could see a change in her disposition."

That Sunday came around, the tournament was going to happen, massive storm rolls through London and cancels the tournament. She had to go to church. And she said, "That Sunday I'm watching my daughter listen to her grandfather's preaching with a new openness that I'd never seen before. And it wasn't long after that that she gave her life to Christ."

One of my favorite definitions of preaching came from Martin Lloyd-Jones: logic on fire. And in that moment he showed that God is sovereign and in control, "I'm going to actually back up and give space to let God do what only God can do."

You've seen this Vin diagram behind me. We'll talk more about it in a few weeks.

WORD OF GOD, MISSION OF GOD, MOVEMENT OF GOD

This represents Bible teaching, the Great Commission, and the Holy Spirit. And if you look at those concentric circles there is probably a circle that you gravitate to depending upon your background and your personality. That's natural. We want to be right in the middle of that.

So, can I just ask you this? Here's a challenge. Would you look at that and would you be willing over this next year to grow in the area that doesn't come most naturally to you? Be careful of an emotional experience void of good theology. Some of you who love to get your worship on, read a book. Alright? Read a book. Now, I'm an equal opportunity offender. Be careful of theology only devoid of personal encounters or a heart for people. Right?

So, verse 26:

"But what did he do?' they asked. 'How did he heal you?' 'Look!' the man exclaimed. 'I told you once. Didn't you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?'" John 9:26-27 (NLT)

Do you see the progression? He's just a man, He's a prophet, "Hey, man. Do you want to follow Him as well? Man, remember the passion you had after a fresh encounter with Jesus. Don't ever let that go, man. Remember what He has delivered you from.

Some of you are like, "Oh, no. I definitely remember. I just keep that private. I don't talk about it." Man, your relationship with God is personal, yes. It is never private. I don't know where you got that. That concept is foreign to the Bible.

In Romans, chapter 10 it says:

"Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved. But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them." Romans 10:13-14 (NLT)

And we oftentimes apply that verse to preachers, which is true, but it's also true for every person who is a Christ follower. So, can I just ask you, who are you telling? Who is your one more? It scares you to death because your like, "Man, this cultural environment that we live in, they might ask me a tough question." Yeah, they probably will. Be ready. "Well, man, they might reject me." That's a high possibility. You know what? Jesus was rejected too.

"What if I say something stupid?" No doubt you will. And it's great. I do it all of the time. It's great fun. "What if they say no?" They likely will. Man, you don't give up. And by the way, an invite to church is where it begins, it's not the whole story. So, don't just invite people to church and say, "You tell them, preacher." You've got to tell them as well because you will have a sermon I will never preach because it's your encounter with Jesus that others need to hear about.

Now, an invitation to church is where you can begin. Easter is a great time for that. But can I just also say this? Don't say, "Hey, man. I was just thinking you should go to church sometime." That is so weak. That's like what I say to somebody when I say, "Hey, man. We should go to dinner sometime." And if you ever hear me say that we're probably never going to dinner. So, you get really specific. Like, "Hey, man. Why don't you come to church with me this Sunday at the 11:15 service? I'll save you a seat."

Verse 28: Man, I've got to move because I'm out of time.

"Then they cursed him and said, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! We know God spoke to Moses, but we don't even know where this man comes from.'" John 9:28-29 (NLT)

So, they are actually saying, "We are followers of the guy who God used to bring about the law in the Old Testament." Now, Moses was a good and godly man, but he is no Jesus. And then in verse 30 it says:

"'Why, that's very strange!' the man replied. 'He healed my eyes, and yet you don't know where he comes from? We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. If this man were not from God, he couldn't have done it.'" John 9:30-33 (NLT)

Moments ago he was a blind outcast on the margins of society and now he is stirring it up with the intellectual elite and he accidentally just preached his first sermon. See:

An encounter with Jesus will give you courage and clarity.

And he started off with, "Man, I don't know who He is, where He came from, what He does." To now, "This man has come from God." And he was not afraid of the consequences. And this really hacked them off. They said in verse 34:

“‘You were born a total sinner!’ they answered. ‘Are you trying to teach us?’ And they threw him out of the synagogue.” John 9:34 (NLT)

Don’t be surprised when your faith gets tested with resistance. When Jesus heard about it, He runs to him. I’m finishing up the passage now. It says:

“When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ The man answered, ‘Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him.’”

Listen, man. Maybe that’s all you can muster up right now, “I don’t know that I believe in Him, but I want to believe in Him.” And then Jesus stands in front of him, just like He did that woman caught in adultery. I think with the same look on His face. He goes, “Hey, man. Look at Me. You’ve seen Him:

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

And his response:

“‘Yes, Lord, I believe!’ the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.” John 9:35-38 (NLT)

Can I just ask you this today? Would you be willing just like this blind man to open yourself up to the Jesus who is beckoning you and pursuing you and reasoning with you right now?

I’ve literally baptized hundreds if not thousands of people. That old baptistery that we are getting ready to retire with a new and improved one right here, I can’t wait to take that one for a spin. I’ve stood with people in a baptistery, and they’ve been trembling, and tears are streaming down their face, and I’ve asked that question. Who do you think Jesus is? Is He Lord and Savior of your life? And I’ve heard thousands—it never gets old, man—they look at me with tears and they say, “Yes, I believe.”

And their response is to worship. Do they have it all figured out? No. Is there still junk in their life? You bet. But Jesus is Lord.

And then he worships.

And by the way, that’s always our response. Or at least it should be. Because forgetfulness is the greatest enemy of faith. It’s when we forget what God has done, and we stop believing what He can and will do.

Can I just say this to you today, even for those of you who are following Jesus and it’s starting to get a little stale? If you aren’t moved to worship, all that means is that you have forgotten who you are and you’ve forgotten who He is and you’ve forgotten who He died for you to be and where you’d be without Him, and what He did for you.

So, if you ever come here... Maybe you’re new to our church and you walk around, and you go, “Man, I don’t understand why you guys are so excited when you sing. Why all the



raising of hands? Why all of the clapping? Why all of the amens?" Listen. They are remembering who God is and what He has done and refusing to forget.

So, what you may not know about that man who is sitting behind you singing really loud and way off key, by the way, is that he used to be enslaved by an addiction and now he's been set free. And now he refuses to forget.

What you may not know about that woman who keeps both hands up in the air for the entire song set. She is not showboating. She used to struggle with an eating disorder and God set her free from it. She's refusing to forget.

What you may not know about that guy who says Amen at all least Amen-ing parts of the sermon is that he lost his wife through divorce a couple of years ago but today they walked in hand in hand.

What you may not know about that teenager who's worshiping with her eyes closed and tears are streaming down her cheeks is she used to have suicidal thoughts and now she has hope and purpose.

At some point we came into the presence of God as messy, jacked up, blind sinners and now we are forgiven in Christ. We've got a hope and a future and our eternity is secure and we see clearly because of an encounter with Him.

And I want you to have that.

So, I want to ask at all of our locations right now if you would... I'm ending the sermon right now, but I want you to bow your heads and close your eyes, At the beginning of the message I asked you to pray, "God, what word do you want me to hear and receive today?" Right now, in these next 10 to 15 seconds I just want to ask you to pray this prayer:

God, would You please show me something that I needed to see and hear today? And what I need to do with it? Take 15 seconds and pray that prayer.

Now with eyes still closed and just in the quietness of this tender moment is there anything when you prayed that prayer that the Holy Spirit hovered over you and eventually put a finger on your life and pressed in. If there was something He revealed to you.

Maybe for you it's that last five percent that you're withholding from Him. Maybe for you it's some secret sin. Maybe for you you're just not taking that full step of obedience that He's asked you to. Is there anything the Holy Spirit pressed in on you?

So, with heads bowed and eyes still closed would you simply raise up your hand as a symbol of repentance and let me pray over you right now. There are hands going up all over the room where the Holy Spirit just leaned in and pressed in on your life.



Father I just want to pray for those who have hands raised around the room recognizing that they are an unfinished work and that we still are blind and need Your touch to heal and to restore our sight.

Father, I pray that You would open our eyes and when you do we would also open our mouths to tell others what you have done. Father, would You please help us to be students of the Word so that we can contend for the faith. Would You help us to be gentle and respectful of others but to also have courage and clarity. God, would You please help us to share how You have so radically changed our life because there are so many who need to know.

So, we come to You with consecrated hearts, and we thank You for the teaching of Your word. We receive it with humility and praise. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen and Amen and Amen.

Come on, man. Would you stand to your feet across all of our locations? Let our response be to worship the risen King right now.

