

Finding Purpose and Hope in a World Broken by Sin (John 9:1-12)
That You May Believe: The Gospel of John
Southern Hills Baptist Church
February 19, 2017

WELCOME

Happy Sunday! It is a joy to be with you tonight. God, the Creator of the Cosmos, the Designer and lover of your soul, has not been silent. He reveals Himself that we may know Him. Let us take advantage of this gracious reality by opening His Word now to John 9.

INTRODUCTION – A BROKEN WORLD

- Right now there are areas in our world that are so dangerous that people are fleeing for their lives and willing to uproot their families or even be separated from their families and move to the other side of the globe. They are looking for peace, but at incredible cost.
- Sadly, there were over 15 million new cases of cancer in 2016, 15 million!
- There will be babies born this week who can't see or can't hear.
- In the United States, a country of great medical resources, there will be over 2,000 babies that fall asleep and never wake up for inexplicable reasons (SIDS).
- In 2011 there were nearly 1,700 tornados that killed over 550 people.

I could keep going, but I think the point is made, we live in a world that is broken. If you need more examples feel free to simply watch the news tomorrow. They will let you know of the countless ways our world is dangerous or falling apart.

Why?

It is statistics like these and many others that leave the world asking, "Why?"

- Why does all of this bad stuff happen?
- What did those babies do to deserve to be born blind?
- Why do tornados so often rip through populated places?
- Why is cancer so hard to cure or defeat?

What Do You Make Of It?

The brokenness of the world that we live in is overwhelming at times, isn't it? What do you make of all of the suffering and pain in our world that seemingly has no direct cause? How do you process all of the brokenness in the world?

Making Sense of the Madness – The Curse of Sin

The Scriptures help us make sense of this madness. We can trace all of these things that we have brought up back to the matter of sin or more specifically, the curse of sin. It is this curse that is responsible for all disease, natural disaster, death, and even small annoyances like mosquitos and weeds. We all live in a world that carries this curse, which means suffering, pain, trials, they are all unavoidable.

- How are we to live in this kind of world?

- How are we to make sense of it?
- Is there a point to the pain?
- Where can we find hope?

Passage Preview

Tonight we have an opportunity to see Jesus and His Disciples encounter a man who felt the curse of sin in a very real and heavy way. In this encounter Jesus teaches us how we should live in a world that is broken by sin, how we should respond to the pain, sadness, difficulty of the circumstances that life seems to unavoidable throw at us. Then Jesus miraculously gives us hope by previewing what life will look like when He one day finally and fully reverses the curse of sin. It is a picture of Jesus' future kingdom that should bring us all great hope and joy.

Let's read through our passage now. Hear the Word of God...

John 9:1-12

[1] As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. [2] And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [3] Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. [4] We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. [5] As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." [6] 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 [7] and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

[8] 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?" [9] Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." [10] So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" [11] 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." [12] They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

PRAYER

Let's Pray...

Heavenly Father,

We live in a broken world. The pain and suffering that we witness and bear can be overwhelming and even confusing. What are we to do in the midst of all of this pain? How are we to respond to the brokenness that we live in? Would you show us this from your Word tonight? Would you reveal powerful and beautiful realities about Jesus that would lead our hearts to be filled with hope and excitement as we consider what it means to call Him Savior? Would you give us an eager anticipation for the good work that Jesus will accomplish when He restores creation to the state you originally designed for it? May our longing for the work of Jesus produce a greater longing for Jesus Himself. Satisfy our hearts with His goodness.

We pray these things in Jesus' name,

Amen

CONTEXT

Now before we jump into the larger text here I want to point out a couple of things for context's sake...

Living Under the Curse

First, the story we are considering centers around Jesus' work with a blind man. Let's get a feel for the background of this blind man, best we can with the limited information we have.

- First, we are told that he was blind from birth and his parents affirm this later on in the passage. He has spent his entire life without sight. This is all he has ever known, but that doesn't make it easy in any way, right? We live in a world made for and tailored for the seeing. This man's life has been an uphill struggle in so many ways due to his lack of sight.
- Something else we see in this text is that he is described as a beggar, meaning his family didn't have enough money to provide for him. He lived in poverty. He spent his days on the streets asking for people to help him. He had very little and he didn't have the power to change that on his own. He couldn't just go and get a job.

I point these things out to simply say that this man had lived a rough life. Not many things had broken his way. His disability was no small annoyance; it dramatically altered his life every second of every day.

The Bible's Authenticity – Deals with Real Problems

This is something that is beautiful about the Bible. It doesn't shy away from tough situations. **Jesus is going to deal with the difficulty of people suffering under circumstances that they can't control.** Why do bad things happen? Why do diseases and disabilities strike people? Why do natural disasters upend life? How are we to live in a world full of suffering? **The Bible is authentic and works through situations we can all relate to and live in. It doesn't try to avoid the tough questions or distract you by changing the subject, it deals with these issues head on.** Praise God for His wonderful Word!

Jesus Initiated

The other piece of context I want us to take note of before we jump into the meat of this text is how this encounter was initiated. We see this in verse 1. As Jesus was walking He saw the blind man. It was Jesus who took notice of the blind man. This is what led to the disciple's question and the interaction that followed. Jesus took the initiative. **He was drawn towards the person who was hurting, to the person who was going to need more, to the person that would take a greater investment.**

Walks Towards Need and Sacrifice

What a beautiful Savior we have in Jesus! **When He sees great need, when He sees a relationship that would required sacrifice and investment, He does not turn and walk the other way, He walks toward that person.**

Ever Walked the Other Way?

How many times have you seen someone who was hurting or someone who was struggling with the hand that life had dealt them and instantly knew that if you engaged them it would require a lot more of you than if you went and talked to a friend who carried less baggage, and in that moment you walked away? You reasoned to yourself, **you just didn't have the time, or you were too tired, or whatever other excuse you told yourself in that moment.** We have all been there right?

You Are the Needy One Jesus Walked Towards

Praise God for Jesus who walks towards those people! Because understand this... **You and I are those people. We are the neediest of people.** Ephesians 2 tells us that we were dead in our trespasses and

sins. We didn't require a pat on the back or a quick pep talk, we needed new life! Jesus walks towards us, giving us everything by laying down His life that we may find it.

Show the Love You have been Shown

It is Jesus' example that we should follow. **As people who have been loved in a time of desperate need, we should be a people who go and love others who are in desperate need.** So when you come across someone in pain, who is hurting, or someone who you recognize simply needs a friend, someone to be with them, to be a shoulder to cry on, or perhaps it is someone who is just lonely and they need company, a friend, someone to take an interest in them, what will you do? **I want to encourage you to be like Jesus and walk towards that person, make that investment, show love in the same way that you have been loved in Jesus.**

Transition

So as we head deeper into our text, we have a man who has spent his life without sight and in poverty and Jesus sees the pain of this man and walks towards him, having a heart for him. The first big idea I want us to see in this text is what Jesus teaches us about how to live under the curse of sin. He ultimately teaches us to look for purpose, not cause.

LIVING UNDER THE CURSE – LOOKING FOR PURPOSE, NOT CAUSE (vs. 1-3)

As Jesus and the Disciples walk towards this blind man the disciples ask Jesus a question. Let me read it to you, it is found in verse 2...

John 9:2

[2] And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

What Caused the Blindness

As the disciples see this poor beggar who had been blind from birth they asked Jesus about the cause of this man's tragic situation. Why was he blind? Had he done something to deserve this? Had his parents sinned in some way that caused God to lay out this disability? The Disciples, like most any other Jewish person in this day and age, tied personal sin to suffering. They saw a direct cause and effect relationship between someone's personal sin and their suffering. So to see someone in suffering would mean there must have been some significant sin that had taken place.

Personal Sin CAN Cause Suffering, but Not in Many Situations

We are going to dive deeper into this in a bit, but let me just pause quickly and say that your personal sin CAN cause suffering, but that does not mean that ALL suffering is caused by personal sin. It surely wasn't the case for this blind man who was blind before he even had the capacity to sin. Jesus affirms this in verse 3...

John 9:3

[3] Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents..."

So Jesus clears this matter up quickly. This man's suffering was not due to his or his parents sin specifically. We will come back later and talk through the cause for the suffering that exists in our world.

Look at Purpose, Not Cause

For now, I want to focus in on the explanation Jesus gives here. The disciples asked Jesus for the cause, what caused this man's blindness? Jesus provides an answer, but it isn't an answer to the question they asked. He gives an answer to a better question. **Rather than answering the question around cause, He gives them an answer around purpose. What purpose did God have in allowing this man to be blind from birth?** That is the question that Jesus answers.

We see it at the end of verse 3...

John 9:3

[3] Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Why is He Blind? Display God's Works

So Jesus moves the conversation from the cause of the man's blindness to the purpose of his blindness. Why was this man ultimately blind? It was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Not a Complete Statement on Suffering

Just a quick note... this explanation from Jesus isn't a complete explanation of suffering. This isn't the only purpose God has in sovereignly allowing suffering. There is more to be said and we will get there, but for the time being focus in on what Jesus is saying.

Hope-Filled Explanation – Purpose in Pain

This is a **hope-filled explanation** from Jesus. He is teaching that even **our suffering has a good purpose**. God has a **purpose in your pain**. He **doesn't allow any of it to be wasted**. He is actively working in these dark situations for a larger and greater purpose.

Display His Glory

What is one of the purposes that God is working towards in the midst of your pain or suffering? He is working to display His might, His goodness, His power to change people, His ability to satisfy the hearts of His children more than anything else, more than comfort, health, or wealth. **God is working to show others His greatness through you!**

Displayed in the Miraculous

Sometimes God does this through the miraculous. Sometimes God makes the blind to see again as was the case with this man, or He causes the lame to walk, sometimes he removes the trial altogether.

Displayed in a Treasuring Endurance

Other times God doesn't go that route. Remember Paul's prayer for deliverance from the thorn in the flesh he experienced. Jesus didn't deliver Paul from that great trial. Listen to what He says...

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

[9] But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [10] For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Jesus provided the grace needed to endure and through this Paul brought God much glory as people saw that Jesus was His ultimate treasure as he sacrificed comfort for the cause of the Gospel. **Jesus was sweeter, more rewarding, provided greater joy, than anything else in this world. The works of God were on display in Paul in this moment. God's Work wasn't to remove the thorn, it was to**

satisfy the heart of Paul in the face of great pain. This is often how God will display His work in the midst of your pain.

How to Live in the Midst of Brokenness

In giving this explanation Jesus is teaching us how to live in the midst of a broken world that is full of pain and suffering. It is so easy to be like the Disciples, when trials come, **when suffering surfaces in our lives, we look for someone or something to blame. Who caused this? Who's fault is this?**

What Good is Cause Here?

Let me ask you, **what good does this line of thought bring about? How is it helpful?** Hunting down someone or something to blame for your pain or suffering generally **leads to bitterness, anger, resentment, discontentment** or a whole host of other response that will **enslave you in a spiral of bitterness and negativity.**

Looking for Purpose

So when the Disciples ask Jesus the question that begins to lead down this path, He shifts gears and redirects them from cause to purpose. He teaches that God is up to something good in your trials, in your pain, in the disease you are struggling with, with the injury you are rehabbing from. Thus this is where we are to center our thoughts in pain, suffering, and trials. We need to ask ourselves...

- What is God up to in this?
- How is God using this in my life?
- How is God going to display His works in and through me?
- How might I bring God glory through this time?
- How can I show the world around me that it is ultimately Jesus that satisfies me and not what was taken from me or what I am now missing?

Bringing Meaning to Suffering

Does that help you at all as you think about the difficulties, stresses, or trials that you face? It is such a huge blessing to me. **If my pain were pointless, if all the pain in the world meant nothing, life would be hard to bear.** I can understand why depression is such an epidemic in our culture. **As our culture moves further from God, it moves further from any sense of hope in the midst of suffering,** it is all pointless and if life is full of pointless pain, what is the point?

Living in Pain? God has a Purpose

There is a point though, isn't there? That is what Jesus teaches His Disciples in this encounter. This is something we need to hold tightly to. Maybe you are here tonight and you are living with a lot of pain, know this... God has not forgotten you. God wants to use even this pain as a good in your life. He wants to grow you and glorify Himself. One of the joys of this is that if Jesus is your ultimate treasure in life becoming more like Him and bringing Him glory should be your greatest desire. **The pain you walk through will be real, but the joy you experience in making much of Jesus is also very real** and it is lasting.

No Pain? Prepare for it

Maybe you are here tonight and you are not walking through a valley right now, praise God, but we live in a broken world, **it is only a matter of time. Hold on to this precious truth now** so when you are hit by a trial you may have hope.

TRANSITION

So as we have opened up, Jesus has shown us how we are to respond to the broken world that we live in. The world we live in is infected and cursed by sin. In the midst of this our sites need to be set on the purpose of God. What Jesus shows us next is a small preview of what our world will look like when He reverses the curse of sin.

REVERSING THE CURSE – A GLORIOUS PREVIEW FROM OUR GREAT SAVIOR (vs. 4-12)

I want to take a moment and answer the question that Jesus didn't answer in this passage as it will help us appreciate His miracle all the more. The Disciples asked what caused the beggar's blindness. Again, Jesus focused on the purpose God had, not the cause, but the Bible does address the cause.

- So what causes people to be born blind?
- Why are some babies born with deformities?
- Why does cancer exist?
- Why do tornados rip through cities with great destruction?
- What causes suffering in general?
- Why do many live with great pain?

The Curse of Sin

The answer to these questions, it is sin, but not in the sense that the Disciples asked. It usually isn't our personal sin that causes our personal suffering. Rather it is the very presences of sin in the created world that has brought about this suffering. Had Adam never sinned, should we all be living in the Garden of Eden today in a state of innocence, without sin or rebellion, we would live in a world without suffering, without pain, without cancer, without blindness, without natural disasters, without disease of any kind. All of this suffering is a result of sin.

Genesis 3 – The Curse

Theologians refer to this reality as the curse of sin. When sin entered the world God put a curse on the world...

Genesis 3:17-19

[17] And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; [18] thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. [19] By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Part of the curse mentioned in Genesis 3 was on the ground or the earth. Notice that after this curse the world that God Created no longer functions as originally designed. The earth would bring forth trials and difficulties. Rather than just producing fruit, there would be thistles and thorns and none of it would come easy. Death is also part of the curse. Man was not originally created to die, but that all changed with sin.

Subjected to Futility – In Bondage to Corruption

All of this is reaffirmed in the New Testament in Romans 8...

Romans 8:18-25

[18] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. [20] For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. [23] And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

So God placed creation in a state of futility. What does this mean exactly, that creation was “subjected to futility.” The word “futility” means to not function as something was designed to. Creation was originally designed to support life, a thriving life, but with the entrance of sin it now also brings death.

Paul also says that creation is held in bondage to corruption and is groaning to be set free. You see creation lives under the curse of sin.

Our Physical Reality Reflected Our Spiritual Reality

It is this curse that causes things like blindness, cancer, disease, natural disaster, and suffering in general. Why did God do this? This seems extreme maybe. When sin entered the world humanity was plunged into death. Our spiritual state was beyond bad. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2 we are dead and children of wrath.

Making It Plain and Easy to See

While this is true, it is a spiritual reality and thus it can more easily be dismissed through various justifications and rationalizations. **So God, in love, caused creation, what we can see, what we can touch, what we can hear, smell, and taste, He caused our tangible, physical world to reflect our spiritual reality. It was His loving work to show us the great problem that we have spiritually. The problem of suffering in our world is meant to show us a symptom of a more serious problem, our spiritual state.**

Seeing Suffering, Remembering Our Spiritual State

So when we see someone who is suffering in the broken world that we live in, and that is all of us to some degree or another, we are not meant to ask the question the Disciples asked about who sinned to cause this. Rather we should see that suffering and be reminded we all have sin in our lives and spiritually we are bankrupt and hopeless apart from God.

Horrible and Good

So this is the curse of sin. It is a horrible thing, in that it is the effect of sin and sin is awful. **It is a good thing in that tells us of a greater danger we need to respond to**, namely the soul-killing reality of sin and it is this reality that points us to our need for a Savior.

Good News of the Gospel – The Curse-Killer

The good news of the Gospel is that **Jesus is the Curse-Killer**. Jesus has come so that He will one day, fully and finally reverse the curse of sin as He has overcome sin through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection.

Previewing the Curse-Killing

And our passage provides one of many previews into Jesus' Curse-Killing work. Let's read verses 3-12 once again...

John 9:3-12

[3] Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. [4] We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. [5] As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." [6] 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 [7] and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. [8] 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?" [9] Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." [10] So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" [11] 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." [12] They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

Busy Working While it is Day

So Jesus tells His Disciples that they need to be busy doing the work of God so long as it is day, which speaks to Jesus' earthly ministry. It was day because He was there and He is the Light of the World. They had to stay busy because Jesus knew His time was limited. Night was coming, which spoke to the time of His crucifixion.

Spit, Mud, Washing, and New Sight

After saying these things Jesus spits on the ground and made some mud of the dirt. He took this mud and rubbed it into the man's eyes and instructed him to go and wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed and upon doing so, this man who has never experienced sight for even a second in his life could now see.

Imagine the Emotion – Kids Hearing

Could you imagine what that must have been like? I have seen a few videos online over the past few years of kids who are deaf getting cochlear implants, giving them the ability to hear for the first time. The doctor has the parents present so the first words the child hears are from their parents. It is a magical moment. If you want to experience some real joy tonight go home and look up some of these videos on YouTube. These kids positively light up. You can tell they are a little confused as they are trying to figure out what to make of this new ability, but it doesn't take long before they are overcome with joy and excitement over the fact that they can hear mom and dad now!

Life Would Be So Different

How would this man have felt and responded? He could see now! His life was going to be so different from this point on, wasn't it?

- He would learn what his parents really looked like.
- He would know what he looked like.
- He would be able to experience sun sets and colors
- He would be able to take in the largeness of a mountain and the smallness of a gnat in a whole new way.

All of the limitations he experienced without sight would be gone.

- He could get a job.

- He could go to the market on his own. He could read the Scriptures for Himself.

Oh the joy!

Inquisitive Folks

People could hardly believe what had happened. As you would expect he received a whole host of questions from those in the city and he testified to the miracle that Jesus performed.

His Will Becomes Reality

So all it took was some mud to make this blind man see. Why don't doctors use this method today to cure blindness? **Because it wasn't the mud that was special, it was the man who applied it. Jesus is Creator so when Jesus desires for the physical world to behave a certain way, His will becomes reality. Jesus' will shapes reality.** Jesus desired for this blind man to see again and thus He did.

We Pray to Him!!!

Real fast side note... **this is who we pray to. We pray to the God of the universe who shapes reality by His mere will.** This is Who I want my prayers going to. What a joy! What a wonder! Pray with this knowledge!

A Preview of Reversing the Curse

Now in performing this great miracle of making the blind man to see, Jesus is giving us a preview of how He will one day, fully and finally, reverse the curse of sin. This man's blindness wasn't due to his sin or his parents sin, it was due to the curse of sin, it was due to the fact that we live in a world that is broken by sin. The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus has overcome sin. He has overcome your personal sin as well as the curse of sin. One day, at the appointed time Jesus will fully reverse the curse of sin and there will be no more blindness, there will be no more disabilities, there will be no more cancer, there will be no more auto-immune diseases, there will be no more allergies, there will be no more heart attacks, there will be no more devastation from natural disasters.

Seeing the Miracle and Rejoicing Over the Coming Kingdom

When Jesus heals this blind man and restores his sight, He is giving us a glimpse, a small preview of the greater work He is going to accomplish. **When we read this wonderful miracle of the blind man being given his sight back we shouldn't just rejoice over his personal gain, we should rejoice in knowing that our Savior is going to undo all suffering, all pain, all disease, all death one day.** That is what the fullness of the Kingdom of God will be like in eternity. We will live with the curse of sin having been fully broken in a state of true and lasting Joy and it will all be because of our great Curse-Killing Savior, Jesus!

A People of Hope

Which means, as **we walk through times of pain, suffering, and trials we are to be a people of great hope.** We can know that for those in Christ the pain we have experienced and that others are walking through will be done away with. We can know, that **as Paul wrote, the sufferings of this present time were light and momentary in comparison to the joy and glory that is ahead of us in eternity. Our circumstances never have to define or dominate us because we can always know that Jesus has already defeated sin and the suffering it brings and we will one day live in the fullness of this reality forever.**

CONCLUSION

The reversal of the curse of sin will change everything and we wait eagerly for that day. In the mean time, pain and suffering are a real part of life. When we walk through these times we will often weep

together, but in the midst of that weeping we will look to the purposes of God, that He may be glorified and that our joy in Him would deepen. In these times we will be a people of great hope, looking forward to the ushering in of the fullness of Christ's kingdom.

Jesus Produces Purpose

It is only in Jesus that pain and suffering find a purpose. Praise God for a Savior who can take something evil and awful and work a good purpose out of it. Praise be to the Curse-Killer, Jesus.

Let's Pray