

Miracles of Jesus 12-10-21a

This is Sunday, the 21st of October, 2012. We continue our study of the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ by looking at one of the longest accounts you will find of a miracle. This takes an entire chapter in the Gospel of John, John chapter 9. This is the healing of the man born blind.

And what a powerful and significant account this is. We'll take a moment as we begin to dedicate our time to the Lord, ask His blessing on us, cultivate the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that these things will not only be interesting but useful and practically applicable for us. When we study, these things should change us.

They should enable us to look at life a bit differently, think and act more in accord with God's plan and purpose for us. So we'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, what a blessing it is to spend time appreciating and contemplating Your character, the revelation of who You are in the pages of Scripture, and we see the outworking of those truths in our own lives.

We thank You for Your essence, for Your unchanging and unfailing love and grace and mercy, Your righteousness and Your justice. We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ who embodied and fulfilled all of those things in human flesh to give us a picture that we could understand and comprehend and appreciate walking in our midst and living in subjection to the conditions that we face every day. We know that Your empathy for us and Your compassion on us is expressed in and through the Lord Jesus.

We thank You for Him and for His intercessory ministry on our behalf. We thank You most of all for our relationship to You through Him. We ask Your blessing on us as we study this passage, this account of the Lord Jesus during the days of His flesh and the picture that it represents of things past, things present, and things future.

We pray that each one of us will come away from our fellowship and worship this morning strengthened and encouraged and invigorated for the life to which we have been called and the future to which we are headed. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's take a look at John chapter 9. The best thing to do is get a refresher on exactly what took place. Keep your antenna up and your radio on and tuned to the frequency here because there's a lot more happening than meets the eye. I think you all have learned by now to watch for the symbolic value of details in these.

They are not just Bible stories. They are not just interesting happenings. There is significance in every detail.

There is significance in the circumstance. There is significance in the specific malady.

There is significance in the way that Jesus heals it.

There is great significance in what Jesus says. There is also significance in what the opposition says or what the person who is healed says. We have all of that in abundance in this passage.

So watch closely. If you were going to present a Bible class on this yourself, what would strike your eye? What would you watch for? What would make a point of application? The best way, I've mentioned this many times, but anytime you approach a passage and you're thinking about teaching it as I regularly do, I always am convicted and reminded that the first and best way to approach a passage is to learn it. We study to learn.

I do not study to teach. I don't say, well, I've got to present a lesson. Let me go find something that will make those people better or something they need to hear or something that will improve them.

They're a bunch of rascals, so I'll find a good passage and beat them over the head with it. Can't do that. We all study to learn.

I study to learn. It hits me and needs to be a rebuke and a correction and an instruction to me first. And after we emerge from that process, after it has been looked at and applied personally, then we can speak the truth to one another in love.

But the last thing, catch yourself, if you ever catch yourself hearing and you say, oh, that was such a wonderful lesson. I need to get that tape and give it to so-and-so. I need to get those notes and give it.

So-and-so really needs to hear that. Stop yourself, slap yourself, stomp yourself on the foot and say, shame on me. Cut that out.

Don't be thinking of other people and, oh, so-and-so really needs to hear this. Somebody said that one time when I was pastoring elsewhere, and I just almost exploded on the spot. I thought spontaneous human combustion might become a reality right there because I thought, did you not hear? The passage itself was on paying attention to your own knitting.

Judge not lest ye be judged, but the measure with which you judge others, you yourself will be judged. Oh, so-and-so really needs to hear that. They're very judgmental.

We don't want to do that. Listen to me now. This passage is going to talk about Israel.

It's going to talk about the Pharisees. It's going to talk about a lot of different things. But it is here for me.

Say this to yourself. This passage is for me. I'm not going to think about anybody else.

I'm not going to worry about anybody else. I am not going to apply it to anyone else. And we need to really have this approach about all of the Scripture that we look at.

It is for me. This passage is me. So, John chapter 9, Now as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from birth.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? And Jesus answered, Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work.

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva. And he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.

And he said to him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which is translated, sent. So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, Is not this he who sat and begged? Some said, That's he.

Others said, He's like him. He said, I am. I am he.

Therefore they said to him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and I received sight. Then they said to him, Where is he? He said, I do not know.

They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight.

He said to them, He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see. Therefore some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath. Others said, How can a man who is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them.

They said to the blind man again, What do you say about him, because he opened your eyes? He said, He's a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him that he had been blind and received his sight until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How then does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind, but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know.

He is of age, ask him, he will speak for himself. His parents said these things because

they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that he was the Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, He is of age, ask him.

So they again called the man who was blind and said to him, Give God the glory. We know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he is a sinner or not I do not know.

One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see. Then they said to him again, What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? He answered them, I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples? Then they reviled him and said, You are his disciple, but we are Moses' disciple.

We know that God spoke to Moses. As for this fellow, we do not know where he is from. The man answered and said to them, Why, this is a marvelous thing that you do not know where he is from, yet he has opened my eyes.

We know that God does not hear sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, he hears him. Since the world began, it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

Then they answered and said to him, You were completely born in sins. Are you teaching us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when he had found him, he said to him, Do you believe in the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him? Jesus said to him, You have both seen him, and it is he who is talking with you.

Then he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him. Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.

Then some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words and said to him, Are we blind also? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, We see, therefore your sin remains. Well, that is a fascinating and entertaining account.

But let's begin at the beginning and think about what we've just read. There is quite a lot of repetition in this story, is there not? How many times are we told that Jesus made clay and put it on his eyes, and he washed, and then he saw? We have the initial account. Then the neighbors ask him what happened.

That's the second account. Then they bring him to the Pharisees. The Pharisees ask, and he explains it to them again.

That's the third account. Then the Pharisees don't seem to be paying close enough attention, and so he says, Look, I told you already. And you weren't listening.

But the method is obviously important because it is repeated. And we have the parents mentioned at the very beginning. The thing that instigates the whole healing starts with the disciples' question.

They look over and they see this blind man, and they don't say, Lord, are you going to heal this man? The man doesn't come up and say, Lord, heal me. And this tells us, perhaps, that as Jesus and the disciples traveled around, Jesus didn't just heal everything and everybody that came into his view. And so the disciples ask sort of an academic question, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Because he just sees the man blind from birth.

Jesus says, Neither this man nor his parents sinned. So his parents are mentioned twice right at the outset. And the parents come back at the behest of the Pharisees to speak on their own behalf.

But let's take a look, first of all, since there's a lot of material here, let's look first at the healing itself. And then we'll look at these layers of discourse and discussion that surround it. Obviously, you can't tell necessarily by looking at someone that they are born blind.

You see a blind person, it could be an accident, it could have been a disease they had as a child, could have been late onset, could have been any one of a number of things. Obviously, at some point there was more conversation than what is recorded here to find out that the man was born blind. Because John begins his account, Jesus saw a man who was blind from birth.

And this isn't necessarily something that we could determine. Jesus may well have known it through his sort of supernatural ability to know things. But the disciples say, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? So the disciples also know fairly quickly.

And whether somebody made an inquiry, some discussion that isn't recorded, but the disciples know right away that he's born blind. But it is very significant that it isn't of unknown origin. We have other people that have various maladies that Jesus heals, and it doesn't say how it originated.

Other times it does. The woman with the issue of blood that had an onset 12 years earlier. In this case, it's very important that this is congenital.

He never had sight. So Jesus gives a discussion. If you've got a red-letter edition there, you see verse 3, 4, and 5 is all red.

But when he had said these things, we'll return to Jesus' words. But when he had said these things, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva. Is there any other miracle you can think of where Jesus spat on the ground and made mud, made clay? This is the only one.

We have another account in John where if the account is accurate, there's some trouble in the text. But, you know, the pericope of the woman caught in adultery, and everybody's accusing her, and it says Jesus stooped and wrote on the ground. Assuming the veracity and the inspiration of that account, we have Jesus doing something with the ground, not in relation to a miracle, but here he makes this mud.

Now, we know that there is another miracle that we very recently analyzed where Jesus used saliva. Remember that? I see men like trees walking. But he didn't make mud.

So sometimes he will say, you know, your faith has made you well, and someone can recover instantaneously. Other times Jesus will do some form of manipulation. He will lay his hand on someone.

The woman that was bent over, he put both hands on her and raised her up, and she was straight. So this involves three separate things. Jesus is going to use saliva.

He's going to use the dust of the earth, and he is going to apply it manually to the man. You think about all the possible permutations here. Even if he spat and made the clay, he could have said, now pick up the clay and rub it on your eyes.

And this would have some significance, obviously, that Jesus provides a thing, and then you have to pick it up and use it for yourself. But no, Jesus, and what is the order? Jesus didn't spit into his hand. He didn't pour dirt into his hand and spit on that.

Jesus spat on the ground. Then he reaches down and takes where he spat and makes this clay, picks it up, he's got clay in his hands, and then he takes it and applies it. I would guess he probably put his hands on each side of the man's head so the man knew that he was, I think, kind of cold, wet clay hitting your eyes with no warning might be startling to a blind person.

And we understand this to be the eyelids, just for clarity. If you're going to put mud on someone's eyes, I don't think you would put it in their eyes, even if they're blind. There's probably sensation.

I just don't think Jesus would stick mud into his actual open eyes. These are closed eyes, and Jesus applies the mud to the eyelid, right? So he made clay with the saliva, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And he said to him, Open your eyes, and behold, he opened his eyes and he could see.

No, he has to leave. And he has to obey a specific command. Now, they're wandering

through the town here, and there could be any number of sources of water available, but he has to go to a specific place.

Where does he have to go? The pool of Siloam. This is a very specific body of water. If you've seen that plaster cast on the wall at my house of the Siloam Tunnel inscription, it goes back to the days of Hezekiah, where they cut the tunnel through the rock out to the Spring Gihon, and two teams worked, and they tunneled through the rock, trying to meet each other, and the tunnel snakes around a little bit.

But amazingly, with the technology available in that day, Hezekiah's day, they met, and they linked the two tunnels, and the water flowed from outside Jerusalem into Jerusalem and formed this pool. And it is spring water, and it travels through the tunnel, and it is now available so that if the city were besieged, they had water. So this pool is of great antiquity.

It is well over 700 years old. And this is where he is to go. Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which is translated, sent.

So he went and washed and came back seeing. He went and washed and came back seeing. So we're not given the precise instant at which his sight returned, but one would suspect that at the point that the mud was washed off, he opened his eyes, and he had sight.

We've talked about these miracles of restored sight before, where not only do the eyes work, and light hits the retina, and the optic nerve translates the signals back to the brain, but all of what babies learn by experience over the course of months is instantaneously restored. All of the knowledge and programming in the brain, the ability to interpret, the ability to focus, the ability to establish a sense of depth, melding the images from both eyes, the ability to interpret colors and shapes and all the rest of it, is restored as well. And this, to me, is as miraculous as the physical ability being restored.

God knows the way we are built, and the Lord Jesus isn't present for the healing. You could say, well, if Jesus is right there, and he's got x-ray vision of a sword, and he looks there and he says, ah, well, the reason the man can't see is that the optic nerve did not develop properly, and there's no connection from the eye to the, or his retina is missing or damaged, or his lens is missing or damaged, or his pupils didn't open properly, or some such thing. And Jesus would sort of diagnose it on the spot and use a miraculous power to restore that physical thing.

But what's amazing is Jesus puts the mud on his eyes and says, go to the pool and wash. And so was his sight restored, but he didn't know it because his eyes were pasted shut with the mud? Is he already able to see, but he won't know it until he goes and washes the mud? What if he had gone to a nearby bucket of water and washed it off? I suspect he would not have been able to see, which tells me that the healing did not take place

until he went to the pool, because Jesus said a specific body of water. And by the way, how sensitive is this of the Lord Jesus? Okay, blind man, tap your way to the pool of Siloam.

You're blind. Jesus could have said, here, hold out your hand. Here's a little bit of mud.

Now go wash your hand in the pool. But by the way, your eyes are fixed and you'll be able to get there much easier now. He makes the blind man travel in his blindness to a specific place.

Now the man's been blind from birth, so he knows how to get around, but this is a little bit of additional labor. He keeps him blind for a time, doesn't he? Deliverance is on the way, but it is delayed. Is this a theme we have ever seen in the plan of God before? Now, did Jesus make the man a promise? Go wash in the pool of Siloam, and behold, you will see like anybody else, and you will dance and leap.

He didn't say anything. He put mud on his eyes. He said, go wash in the pool.

It is an implicit promise, isn't it? Did he ask the man, do you wish to see? Did the man ask and say, I would like to see, if you have faith? Lord, I don't have faith, but help my unbelief, like the man with the son that was demon-possessed. None of that. There's no apparent discussion at all.

The only thing Jesus says to this man after he smears spit mud on his eyes is, go wash in the pool of Siloam. And the man does this. Why? Does the man ask that question? Well, A, why did you put mud on my eyes? And B, why do I have to go to the pool of Siloam? This is what a lot of people want to do with the grace of God.

They want to question it. They want to analyze it. They want to understand it.

They want some explicit details. This man says, you spit and made mud and stuck it on my eyes. By the way, is saliva a clean or an unclean substance under the law? I also wonder, this is a Sabbath day, right? There are limits on what the Pharisees said was a Sabbath day journey.

I have to wonder. I would love to know exactly the spot where Jesus had this conversation and find out, was it just beyond a Sabbath day journey to get to the pool of Siloam? Did they kind of give a waiver to the blind guy because, well, he's blind. He probably didn't know how far he had traveled.

You know, all of this nitpicking of the law. Well, here's the thing. Here's the first thing to note.

Jesus was passing by. That's the very first thing. It's the first thing that's said, and it's the first thing to note.

When's the last time we saw Jesus passing by in our miracles study? There was some liquid water involved in that as well, was there not? The disciples trying to row across the lake. The wind was against them. And Jesus came walking on the water and would have passed them by.

But he looked over and noticed that there was some distress. And the disciples cry out to him, Here, Jesus is passing by. And the point of application of that is that in the normal course of our walk through life, opportunities are going to arise for application to be a minister, to be a priest, to be an ambassador.

It's in the normal course of our life. We don't have to say, you know, I think I'll pack up a box of tracts and go down to DFW and stand at the door and try to stick one in the pocket of each person that comes in unless they look Middle Eastern, in which case I might be afraid. It's funny how people will get so nervous and afraid with certain people groups these days.

And watch at the airport. If you see any groups and they're going around trying to give people tracts or trying to do evangelism, watch who they don't approach. But it's all wrong.

It's wrong-headed. We are here to walk the path that God calls us to walk. We know what it is.

We have family responsibilities. We have education responsibilities. We have job responsibilities.

We have things that need to be done. We go to the cleaners. We go to the grocery store.

We go to the gas station. We do the normal things of life. And as we are passing by, God puts things in our path.

They are in the normal course of life. You don't have to strain. You don't have to say, I believe I'll go to Borneo and be a missionary.

I've got a burden for the Eskimos. I think I'll go to the tundra and try to find them and evangelize them. Now, there are people who, in the natural course of their life, will have those opportunities presented and will be a missionary to the Eskimos.

But it comes in the normal course. You wind up deciding that you want to learn more about the Word of God, and so you go to a Bible college or you take a class in Bible or you go to a seminary and you say, I just want to take a few classes. While you're there, you get exposed to something.

Maybe a missionary comes and presents something that you hear. Maybe you see something on television. But in the normal course of life, these opportunities come up.

Don't overlook that this entire thing, this whole chapter, starts with Jesus passing by. He's just going where He's supposed to go, being about His Father's business, and this man is in the periphery. The whole thing begins because Jesus is passing by in His normal course of life.

We should be watchful and alert in the normal course of our life for these opportunities to see the works of God revealed. And that's what Jesus says, Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but... And then you have sort of a reference back. The reason he is blind, you could put in parenthesis or in square brackets.

It's terrible grammar, especially in English. Neither this man nor his parents sinned, period. This man is not blind because of sin, close bracket, but in order that the works of God should be revealed in him.

There is a huge accusation against Christianity in general, against the Bible, against the God of the Bible. Why is there suffering in the world? And I've given this to you before. If God is powerful enough to cure suffering and doesn't do it, then He's a bad God and doesn't deserve to be worshipped.

If He's not powerful enough to cure the suffering in the world, then He's a bad God and doesn't deserve to be worshipped. Either way, He doesn't deserve to be worshipped. Jesus answers that question in a single line.

The reason there is affliction, the reason there is suffering, the reason there is deficit in the world, deficit of any kind. We all get an inherited package of strengths and weaknesses, of varying degrees of visibility, varying degrees of debility. We're all debilitated in some way, everybody.

Nobody is perfect. Nobody gets a perfect physical package. We all have congenital weaknesses of various shapes, sorts, sizes, and descriptions.

Some of it's really, really obvious, some of it's not, but everybody has them. Don't feel sorry for yourself and say, well, mine's worse than everyone else's. Everybody has got them, and the reason for it is that the works of God should be revealed in us.

God permits the effects of the fall so that His works can be revealed. So we should start, when we look at a weakness, we look at a limitation, we look at a bad thing, whether it is inherent or circumstantial, and recognize that the reason it exists, the reason God has allowed it is so that His works can be revealed. By extension, when the works of God are seen, that's the glory of God.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament shows forth His handiwork. His glory is revealed in His handiwork, the works of God.

So this should alleviate a lot of our subjectivity, a lot of our self-pity, a lot of our self-

centeredness, a lot of our ingrained, inherent, natural instinct to feel put upon, and feel like we got a raw deal, and feel that people ought to be recognizing us, and feeling sorry for us, and maybe helping us out, because we got some kind of a bad deal. Jesus said, look, it has nothing to do with the man sinning. It has nothing to do with his parents sinning.

He's blind so that the works of God can be revealed in him. And this is the conclusion Jesus has just drawn as He sees the man. He says, here's a blind guy.

He's blind because the works of my Father are going to be revealed. And this is a great way to look at our life. When we look at something and see that it's amiss, or that it's broken, or that it's troubled, we think this is an opportunity for the work of God to be revealed.

This is a place where the glory of God can shine. That's the gift we have from God. Well, how is that going to take place? Jesus is going to go on to say what looks like a big non-sequitur, beginning in verse 4 and extending through verse 5. So we're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, why does Jesus talk about His own work? He says, well, the work of God is going to be revealed. And then Jesus kind of goes off on a tangent. And you think, well, the disciples, they're still looking at the blind guy.

They're thinking, well, if you're going to work a work, how about healing this guy? And you're rambling on about the works and daylight. And what's that got to do? Here's some poor guy, can't see. We've seen you fix people.

Get on with it. Make this guy well. And that'll be one less person that needs healing in Israel.

But Jesus stops. He delays in the story itself. This is a great thing if you've studied narrative and literature.

There is a delay. There is a pushing back of the resolution. And this intermediate material is really important.

But it tends to get glossed over. So we're going to come back from our break and take a look at these two verses. And this is going to greatly inform everything that happens afterward.

But what's our application in this first session? We should look at deficits. We should look at problems. We should look at challenges.

Not as negatives, not as oppressions, but as opportunities. Things that are fallen and broken in this world, things that are fallen and broken in our own life, don't look at it as

an oppression. Look at it as an opportunity.

This is a place where the works of God can be revealed. That's why it exists. Everything that's broken in this life is broken and is allowed to be broken so that the works of God can be revealed.

Nothing is accepted from that statement. It is an absolute doctrinal truth. Everything that is broken is broken and allowed to be broken so that the works of God can be revealed.

When we learn to start looking at the circumstances and issues in our life that way, our hope is going to be rising above the horizon and shining because we know that God's work is going to not only be the resolution for that issue, but we are going to be raised above it and be looking at the good. It isn't just that the circumstance gets fixed. It may or may not get fixed.

But the glory of God is going to be revealed, and our hope is the glory of God. Let's pause here and take our break.