

Miracles of Jesus 12-10-28a

This is Sunday, the 28th of October, 2012. We continue our study, The Miracles of the Lord Jesus, in our second Sunday, looking at John chapter 9, The Healing of the Blind Man. We'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll begin.

Father, what a blessing and privilege it is. Every time we approach your throne, it is no less striking, it is no less impressive, it is no less awe-inspiring to realize the privilege that has been given to us by the Lord Jesus, to cross the great gulf that would otherwise be inevitably and impassively fixed between ourselves and you. But as our mediator, and as the one who has opened that new and living way through the veil, we, as your children, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are qualified and are granted access into your very presence, a place where even the high priest in Israel could only enter once a year, and then, with great fear and trepidation, we are free to approach you at any time, for any reason.

We're so thankful for our mercy and grace that we enjoy from you. We thank you for the Lord Jesus who made it possible for us to have and to exercise this unspeakably great relationship and privilege that we have. We thank you for your word.

We thank you for the truth that it contains, and that through it we are able to see things that our human eyes could never see, and understand things that our human hearts could never understand on their own. We pray that as we study this passage together, that God the Holy Spirit will use his supernatural ministry to effectively present it to our hearts and enable us to understand it, to see its application in the time that remains to us on this earth before the Lord Jesus returns to take us to himself forevermore. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. John chapter 9, 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? Jesus answered, Neither, or neither, this man nor his parents sinned.

Now, does this mean that the man or his parents neither, neither have ever sinned? No. It means that it was not any sin that they committed that had anything to do with him being born blind, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. The works, plural, of God.

You might say going from no sight to having sight would be a work, but this is works. The works of God are going to be revealed in him. Works, plural.

Then Jesus makes what to our eye would seem to be kind of a strange aside, a departure into a subject that you would never expect. I could never in a million years have predicted that this is what Jesus would say next. 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. Well, I've been thinking about this and puzzling on it because there's been something nagging at the edge of my mind here, and I finally ran across something that I think has answered my question.

Neither this man nor his parents sinned. The issue here is not sin. We tend to think when things go wrong, somebody messed up.

Someone made a mistake. Someone failed. Someone fell short.

This situation is somebody's fault. Jesus says it is not this man's fault and it is not his parents' fault that he was born blind, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. And as we noted last week, this is a really good thing for us to remember.

And a necessary shift in our thinking that we need to make based on the Word of God. It is instinctive. It is natural.

It is the first reflexive action for us when something is the matter to say, who stole my cheese? Who created this situation? Who left this candle burning while we left the house? We come back and stuff is on fire. Who left the water on? Who left that running? Who left that open? Who failed? Who forgot? Who was too busy and unthinking and now we've got this situation? We always want to find who messed up. And instead of thinking in terms of fault and blame, we should be thinking in terms of God's works.

These situations that are inevitable, that are part of the fabric of the fallen world, are opportunities for the works of God to be performed. And we have got to make this shift in our thinking. This is where meditation reorients us.

I'm talking about meditation on the Word of God, not the mantra, look for your inner light and pick the lint out of your spiritual navel or whatever it might be. Not this kind of meditation. Not the Wayne Dyer meditation.

Not the Eastern mystic. This is the shift in our thinking. Thoughtful review.

This is chewing on and making sense of the truth that we know. Ask and answer for ourselves the question, so what? I heard this truth in Bible class. Well, so what? Am I any different? Should I do anything any different? Should I act any differently? Speak any differently? Set my priorities differently? Reorder, reshuffle my goals? Re-evaluate my values so that after having evaluated and re-evaluated my valuations are different? Well, we need to do this.

And this is what Jesus says. He's telling the disciples, you can't be walking around looking at things in terms of, well, whose sin that that happened? Whose fault is that? We look at it in terms of, if, remember at the end of the six days of creation, God looked around. God had done everything.

First day, light and darkness. You get the firmament. You get the waters.

You get the dry land appearing. You get the animals and the grasses and the fishes and the birds and all of these things, the lights in the sky and one thing and another. And ultimately you have man.

And at the end of the sixth day, God saw that it was good. God saw everything, that it was good. So what did God do? What further works are there for God to do? It's all good.

So what does God do on the seventh day? He rests. Why? No more works are required. Everything is good.

But yet when Jesus comes, he says, my father is working and I must be working. Why? Because as soon as it is no longer good, as soon as Eve bites into the fruit, really as soon as she makes the decision to bite the fruit, sin has entered the world and death through sin and death passes on to all men for all have sinned. So now what? It's no longer good.

And God goes back to work. By definition, God is at work where everything is not good. Here's a blind man.

Opportunity for God to be at work. Here's a shortfall. Here's a deficit.

It's a place for God to be at work. Here's where we have failed, where we have shot ourselves in the foot. It's a place for God to be at work.

God is at work when things are not good. It's almost definitional. So we want to think this way.

We want to get out of the blame, shame, name of the game idea. We want to think God's thoughts. We want to look at it from what Bob Thieme used to call divine viewpoint.

We want the divine viewpoint, not the human viewpoint. Human viewpoint, somebody is at fault and somebody should pay. God's viewpoint, yes, somebody is at fault, but my son has paid.

Now we can work. Now we can get stuff done. But here's what's really interesting, and this is what I've been really chewing on here, is what Jesus says in verse 4, John 9, 4. I need my Greek open again because we have a verb that is at issue here.

Jesus says, I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work. I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day.

Now, here's the crux of the issue. We tend to think in terms of pairs of concepts that are linked. So if I talk to you about day and night and light and darkness, we immediately say, well, day, light, night, darkness, right? However, they are not linked.

They are not necessarily synonymous. You can have light in the darkness, right? Isn't that our calling? Light's shining in the midst of a dark, perverse world. You set your lampstand up on high.

You don't put it under a bushel basket so that the light can shine and things can be seen. You can have darkness in the day, right? You can go and hide. You can go and hide.

You can go to an inner place where there are no windows. Or you can be blind. If you are blind, there is darkness for you in the middle of the day.

If you have the light, then you can see even at night. So the first helpful thing we can do is disconnect these concepts and remember that light and darkness are different from day and night. And this thought alone almost made my brain run off its rails because I want to go back to Genesis chapter 1 because you've got God saying, let there be light, and God separating the light from the darkness.

Then you have the evening and the morning, the night and the day, if you will, and the transition periods between the two cranking up. I mean, there obviously is a close association. And you normally have light in the day.

It is normally dark at night. But God is the God of the supernormal, the supernatural, right? And there are things that God can do by way of works that are beyond that natural order. So that's the first thing.

Okay. We think about these as separate concepts. Now, why are they different? Why are they not synonymous? Day and night talk about a season, don't they? It's a time.

It's a period of time. We think, well, I've got the day. I've got a work day.

I've got the night. It's the night when I sleep. But it's a season.

It's a little short season. Half of a 24-hour period, give or take, depending on your hemisphere and your latitude, is going to be dark and half of it is going to be light with the natural light that is available. But light and darkness, especially in biblical terms, carry more of a moral or spiritual quality idea.

Day and night speak more of time or season, of opportunities, circumstances, where light and darkness are more qualitative. So there is a cycle in any given day where you've got a part of it that is light and you've got a part of it that is dark. It's interesting the way the Hebrews and the Jews chose, based on Genesis 1, to look at their day.

They say, well, the first half of the day is dark and the second half is light. We in the Western world, we do it at midnight and we say, well, the day starts in the darkness. You have light in the middle and then it ends in the darkness again at midnight.

But when we think about our actual day, our practical day, we say, well, the day starts

when I wake up and it ends when the night comes and I go to sleep. So we've got three different ways of looking at how the cycle starts and finishes. But everybody recognizes the cycle.

In any given day, you've got a part that's dark and a part that's light. So Jesus talks about the day and the night in this passage, and specifically in terms of when you can work and when you can't. This is the season.

This is the opportunity. This is the cycle. Now, what about people who have a night job? What about those of us who stay up late at night working? How do we do that? Well, the day left to itself would be dark, but we bring light in and we redefine that time.

We change the night into day. It's a Dire Straits song that has that as a part of its lyric, turning all the nighttime into the day. It's the walk of life song.

And you can turn darkness to day. You look at the stadium lights for a night game. By the same token, if you have a night shift and you have to sleep during the day, what do you do? Well, you fool your body.

You change your circadian rhythm and you pull the blinds. You get those blinds that are impervious to light, and you make it dark. People use a sleeping mask or something to get darkness going so they can sleep at times that are not normal.

Well, there is this separation of ideas, and this helps us understand John 9.4. I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work. And you say, well, what do you mean no one can work? Why can't we light a torch? Why can't we have a bright, moonlit night? Remember back in creation, day four, God made the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night.

There is light at night, right? It's the moon. What's going to happen in the Matthew 24 description Jesus gives of the end times? What's going to happen toward the end of the tribulation period? The sun will be darkened and the moon will be turned to blood. And those things that give great light during the day and lesser light at night are going to all be darkened.

Well what are we really getting to here? I think when Jesus is talking about this blind man and the disciples are thinking in terms of whose fault is it? Who sinned? Jesus is thinking in terms of what are your capabilities? It is daytime, but this man is blind. He's in darkness during the day. Darkness, light, dark, during the day, day, night.

So this is why He says what He says in verse four, I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work. I'm asking myself the question, what is this night? Well the first thing to look at is the verb.

I mentioned that we've got an interesting situation with the verb here and we do

because John chapter 9 verse 4 is a prophecy. This doesn't say the night is coming. It says, Ere Kittai.

Ere Kittai from Ere Kittai is the future tense. This is translated as though it's a present participle. The night is in the process of coming.

No, this is a future tense. The night will come. It's not there while Jesus is there.

It's there now. The night will come when no one can work. So what are we saying here in this prophetic passage? Actually as I look at it, the concept is the same.

The night is coming, meaning in the future. It's not here yet but it is coming. The night is coming when no one can work.

Well what is this night? This is my question. What is this night? Jesus says it's day. I'm working.

I must continue to do these works until the night comes. So what is the night? Is it when Jesus is no longer on the earth? Is it as we suggested last week when our life is over and we don't have the light and the opportunity to do the works that God has ordained that we should walk in them? All of this is true but there is another idea here which is that the night is coming. A man who is blind can't do the work that ought to be done in the daylight.

He is in darkness during the day. When Jesus says I must work the works of my Father, his work is to bring light where light is needed. And this man is in darkness.

He is blind and he needs the light. And it's a picture as we suggested last time of the nation of Israel. It's the daylight.

The sun has risen with healing in his wings, S-U-N, remember that in Malachi? Until the sun rises. Well the sun is here but the nation is not able to see it. It is dark even though it's daylight.

So Jesus says as long as I am in the world, verse 5, I am the light of the world. So Jesus' presence, he is the sun that rises with healing in his wings and that defines the day but he is the light of the world. So you can have that light even in the darkness, even in the night, but it's supposed to be day.

You're supposed to be able to see the sun and if you can't see the sun, Jesus is going to work the works of his Father to make that available. We are in the kingdom of darkness as unbelievers. We are transferred out of darkness into the kingdom of the son of his love.

Out of darkness into light. We can be in the day, remember 1 John 1, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship. We can be walking in darkness in the

daylight.

Now there is coming a night when no one can work. There is coming a night where both the sun is gone and the light is gone. There is coming a time when no one can work.

There is no match you can strike. There is no flashlight you can turn on. There is no halogen trouble light you can hang up in the rafters to shine on your engine and work on it at night.

That's what Jesus says. Now this colors and undergirds and lays a foundation for everything that follows especially after the healing itself and the threefold repetition of how that miracle was accomplished and the words of the Pharisees as they wrestle with this and grapple with it. So we want to take just a look at this to be sure we understand it.

Light always rules darkness. Again going back to Genesis, the greater light rules the day, the lesser light rules the night. It tells us in Genesis 1.18 that God set those lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth and to rule over the day and over the night and to divide the light from the darkness.

God saw that it was good. So when we have light, it creates a daytime environment that you look around in your house at night and unless you go to a window, you don't really know. If you're in an office building, you can't tell if it's day or night outside because we've created daylight inside.

So the purpose of Christ coming into the world is to create that light and that daytime because the world was plunged into darkness and into night at the fall. You have the light of the law and of the prophets for Israel but the rest of the world is still in darkness. If you keep your place here and turn forward one book to Acts 26.

Acts 26.18, the Lord Jesus talking to Saul on the Damascus road says, I will deliver you from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles to whom I now send you to do what? To open their eyes in order to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me. Paul the Apostle has this ministry, this call, this assignment to open their eyes to turn them from darkness to light. You have the same idea in 2 Corinthians 4.6, God who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, going back to Genesis 1, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So it is Jesus Christ. He is the sun. He defines the day.

He is the light and he states as much here in our John chapter 9 passage. Jesus uses this imagery of light and darkness a lot throughout Scripture in talking about the light of the body is the eye and about there being darkness inside or light inside and even though

you are in the day you can have darkness inside. So we separate these ideas because there is a season and a time which is the day.

I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work. We say, well what if I've got the light? Remember Paul in Thessalonians talking about we are not of the night or of the darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief.

It doesn't say that that night should overtake us as a thief, it says that day should overtake us as a thief. But that day is going to be night for those who are not in and of the light. So these concepts start to be used in opening up an opportunity for us to understand something in this miracle.

We can work while it is day, the night is coming when no one can work. John 9 verse 4 says, I must work. Jesus didn't include the disciples and say we must work.

What is Jesus' unique ministry that the disciples cannot enter into or share? This particular day is the day of the presence of the Lord Jesus. So when the night is coming when no one can work, what is that night? It is the lack of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples at this time in the Old Testament age cannot be that presence.

Because the church age is a mystery and is hidden at this point. All that is in view is Jesus must work the works of the Father while He is present. The night is coming when He is not there and no one can work.

If Jesus is not present, no one can work because He defines the day and He defines the light. The tricky thing is God has found a way to have the Lord Jesus present without Him being here. He has found a way through His body, His bride, His church, and that is us.

So the night comes when no one can work. When will it be that neither Jesus nor the church is here? That is going to be your 70th week. That is going to be the tribulation.

Well, there is a night coming when no one can work. Jesus doesn't say the night is coming when I cannot work. He says when no one can work.

So how do we resolve this? The more you look at it and the more you meditate on it, the more interesting it becomes. So we are going to pause here and take our break, but here is a point of conclusion or of summary from these observations. We are by nature fallen.

We are by nature in the grip of sin. We are by nature citizens of the kingdom of darkness. What is it that changed that? It is our salvation.

What came with our salvation? The light. He is in the light. We are in union with Christ.

We are in the light positionally. Experientially we want to walk in the light as He is in the light and maintain that relationship and fellowship, that shepherding care that God can

provide for us, that the Lord Jesus provides for us is when we are in the light. We cannot be of service.

We cannot be of use in the darkness. We must work the works that God has assigned us. That is why we are here.

We talked about a little bit what those works are last week. What are those works? Well, in a nutshell, it is righteousness by faith. We can do it in any activity.

We can do it in any situation. It is a matter of doing what we do as unto the Lord, looking at it as something God has asked us to do. Someone creates a problem.

We resolve it. We work through it. We have a problem ourselves.

We face a difficulty or a challenge. We work through it as unto the Lord. We keep the Lord in mind and say, God has asked me to be the person that goes through this situation.

I want to do it with good grace. I want to do it in a way that reflects the glory of God. That is righteousness by faith.

Those are the works. It is not in and of itself going down and doing some charity or doing a favor or doing something nice. It is being the people who do what they do as unto the Lord and not unto men.

Not to be seen by men, not to be appreciated or glorified, although that is always nice to be appreciated and thanked or whatever, but we do it because God has asked us to do it. That is living in the day. That is living in the light.

That is doing the works of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. All of that is loaded into the beginning of the healing for a reason. When we come back from the break, we are going to look at the healing itself and how these concepts of day and light and darkness and night weave through the rest of this narrative and provide the foundation for understanding it and making application of it for ourselves.

Let's pause here and take our break.