

Series: Spiritual Health Check-up
Title: Vision Test
Text: John 9:1-12, 35-41
Key Word: Types
Proposition: Everyone will understand the types of spiritual blindness and move toward Christ with growing faith.

A pastor, a Girl Scout, and a computer expert were traveling in a small plane. The pilot informed the passengers that the plane was about to go down but there were only three parachutes and four people. The pilot added, "I should have one of the parachutes because I have a wife and three small children." So he took one and jumped.

The computer whiz said, "I should have one because I am the smartest man in the world. Everybody needs me." So he took one and jumped.

The pastor turned to the Girl Scout and with a sad smile said, "You're young and I have lived a rich life, so you take the last parachute and I'll go down with the plane." The Girl Scout said, "Relax, Pastor, the smartest man in the world just picked up my backpack and jumped out." He may have been a smart man; he even had good eyes, yet, he couldn't see. He tragically failed a vision test.

Good Morning, everyone. We've been talking about a "Spiritual Health Check-up." Today, John, a follower of Jesus, reveals another vision test. Blind since birth this man must have been a lonely person never seeing the face of his parents or friends. He missed out on the beauty of a sunrise or sunset.

John also describes the Pharisees with a different type of blindness, a blindness which we share. They saw objects and images with their eyes yet were unable to

perceive the Truth around them, just like the smart, computer guy. When Jesus referred to this blindness, they responded, “*What? Are we blind too?*”

We too should test our vision by asking, “Are we blind too?” We could ask this of the disciples, the neighbors, the Pharisees, and the blind man. Jesus reveals two forms of blindness—blindness of the eyes and, far worse, the blindness of the heart. Jesus spit and made some mud which he rubbed on the blind man’s eyes. Jesus told the blind man to go and wash it off in the Pool of Siloam (**sih-LO-uhm**). The blind man did exactly what Jesus told him to do. After washing his face he could see for the very first time. Perhaps the first thing he saw was his hands, or the water or the face of Jesus. No longer blind, he could see.

One day a man lost his job, his fortune, his wife and home during the Great Depression. But he held on to his faith, for it was the only thing he had left. One day he stopped to watch some men doing some stonework on a huge church. One of them was chiseling a triangular piece of stone. “What are you doing with that?” asked the man. The workman said, “See that little opening way up there near the spire? Well, I’m shaping this down here, so it will fit up there.”

All of his challenges, worries, and grief impaired this man’s heart vision of what God was doing in his life. Then his tears cleansed the mud from his eyes. Walking away he saw something that he had never seen before. He saw Jesus saying, “I’m shaping you down here, so you’ll fit up there.” No longer blind, he could see.

John identifies three types of heart blindness. **First, the disciples were blind by prejudice.** When the disciples saw the blind man, they seized the opportunity to raise a question which was in the minds of many. “Why was this man born blind? Was it a result of his sin or his parents?” The ancient Jews connected sin with suffering. Wherever there was suffering, then there must be sin. In other words, they thought, “If someone had something wrong with them, then they must not be right with God. If sin causes suffering, then those who are not suffering are those who are right with God.”

What happens when we begin to think that way? We think that we are better than other people. Many don't believe that all suffering is a form of punishment. We know that sickness and disease for the most part is a natural cause of sin in general, not merely a punishment for personal sin.

However, some folks are sometimes blinded by prejudice. They're tempted to form an opinion about someone before they have most of the facts. Their preconceived ideas, usually unfavorable ideas, are based purely on suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred of people different from them.

The Disciples looked at the blind man through the eyes of religious bias. Jesus though saw him as someone in whom God could do amazing work. When are we tempted to judge? When we see a teenage mother struggling to raise her child alone, are we tempted to say, “Well, she should have waited until she was married.” When

we see the effects of alcoholism on the lives of people, are we tempted to say, “They don’t deserve any better!”?

Friends, it’s easier to sit back and debate the theological consequences of bad decisions that others make. It’s more challenging to see others through the eyes of Christ. It takes more love to heal than to judge. It takes greater love to surrender prejudice and to see others through the eyes of Christ. It takes more love to reach out with a hand of healing than it does to point a finger.

What would happen if instead of condemning the teenage mother, the church would offer help and encouragement so that she knows the love of Jesus? What would happened if instead of shaking our heads in disgust at the alcoholic, the church and its people would be a safe haven and a source of encouragement and hope for those who are struggling with that disease? What would happen? God’s people, would God doing amazing work in people’s lives.

Second, the neighbors were blinded by skepticism. What happened when this man returned to the people who knew him? Some didn’t believe it was him. Others demanded an explanation. The neighbors and those around were skeptical of what had happened.

In their defense, it would have been hard to believe what they were seeing. They remembered this man as being blind and begging at the Temple gate, and now he is up walking around. I am sure some of them wondered, “Was he really blind? Was his perceived blindness an excuse for being a beggar?”

At times I struggle with skepticism. How about you? Perhaps some of us wonder about what people say or what people do. I sometimes question people's motives. I wonder about the claims people make. I am cautious in leaving the safety of the known and stepping out into unknown.

However, when I read about the life of Christ and the early church, when I listen to the stories of other Christ-followers I hear God say, "Chris, You can trust Me! You can be confident in my compassion and power."

Take a look around your world. Odds are there is someone you know or love that you don't think can ever be reached by the power of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in Romans, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.*" (Romans 1:16)

Through the power of God, this blind man's life was changed forever. The same thing can happen today if God's people would let go of their doubt in God's power and testify the Good News to everyone. What would happen if God's people everywhere would stop being skeptical of God's power? Millions of lives would be changed forever. Friends, it's time that we as God's people confidently proclaim the love of Jesus to those who seem unreachable.

Third, the man's parents were blinded by fear. The Pharisees called the man's parents in when he wouldn't give them what they wanted to hear. How did his parents respond? Well, they wanted no part of it. They were worried about losing their church membership.

Things were different in the Jewish culture. In our culture, if someone is removed from the church, or if they don't like their church, they can go to the church down the road. However, in the Jewish culture, once you were removed from the Synagogue, you were out. You couldn't go down the road to the other Synagogue. In addition, other people were not allowed to speak or do business with someone who was removed.

It is no wonder the parents were afraid. Imagine for a moment what it must have felt like for them. On one hand your son who was blind from birth can now see, on the other hand, if you acknowledge that Jesus performed this miracle, your were removed completely from your community.

Fear cripples. Fear keeps us from completely experiencing the work of God. Not only in our personal walk with Jesus, but in our corporate walk with Jesus as well. What would happen if God's people and God's churches stopped being fearful? Lives would be changed because we would no longer fear rejection or persecution. Churches would be living the adventure of faith, using every dollar they have to make a difference for the cause of Christ. Friends, I believe that is calling us to live fearlessly. Fearless in our witness...Fearless in our service...Fearless in our giving...Fearless in our worship...Fearless in our love, for perfect love casts out all fear.

However, there is a healthy fear that God calls us to. Listen to what the Proverb says, "*The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man from the*

snare of death.” (Proverbs 14:27) Jesus said, “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*” (Matt.10:28) Paul wrote to the Philippians, “*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good pleasure.*” (Phil. 2:12)

With this healthy fear, we stand before our God in utter awe. We respect and revere his name, recognizing his power and position as only Almighty God. Therefore we submit ourselves to Him. When we fear the Lord, we won't fear anything else. We will step up & out in obedient faith. There is a reward for the life where Christ is exalted, where faith involves discipline. Faith is not simply a “turning it all over to Jesus.” Faith respects Jesus so much that it takes seriously his call, “*If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*” The grace of God is given only to those who practice self-leading faith. You see, we work out, God works in. If we work out our salvation alone, then we are nothing more than defeated moralists, trying to earn our salvation. Without our reverent cooperation with the Lord Jesus, we shall be impotent witnesses for Christ. Without this Holy fear, Christ will be impotent in his efforts to use us to impact our society with His love and power.

So the question is, “Are we blind too?” Do we need some mud in the eye? Well, if our lives are controlled by: prejudice, skepticism, and fear, then we are spiritually blind.

The blind man teaches us an important lesson. He shows us the power of active, obedient, cooperative, fearless faith. Hear again his testimony, “*One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!*” “*If this man were not from God, he could do nothing!*” “*Lord, I believe!*”

Maybe, this morning you have come here blinded by hopelessness. You don’t know why, but life seems hopeless. You don’t know where to find the answer, but it seems as though you are wondering through life blind. You don’t know what you need, but you know you need something. Jesus is here for you. He wants you to respond like the blind man in faith and accept Him as Lord. He offers His prescription for impaired vision. Trust in what the Almighty can do. He can create a miracle through the mundane...reveal the divine through the dull...demonstrate His extraordinary ability through ordinary availability. He can defy the laws of time and space because he created them. Miracles are within God’s power to perform. Remember you can trust in the Almighty God who can. Go ahead; tell him how you need his help today. Tell him your mundane, dull, ordinary life is available to demonstrate His extraordinary ability. ²¹¹⁴