

Believing is Seeing

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide2-5 Larry: Storm Fam Nite. **Hike**. Father/Son. **Fam Nite Musical**.
- B. Slide6 Sun Night Prayer.
- C. Slide7 Foyer Art. We are proud to display our 2nd graders art. They focused on Art History in the church. (Brooke Willis teacher)
- D. Slide8 Baptism Date Aug.18. So sorry we had to cancel our baptism (May 19).
- E. With heavy hearts, we had to close our **High School**, of our **Day School**.
 1. We had to lay off 25 of our friends/staff. So devastating to **our staff, coaches, students & parents**. Reason: *continued decline* in enrollment, & no business model where HS balances financially (tried our best to sustain it for 25 yrs).
 2. Our Pre-school, elem, Middle School, ISP, & Church are all **strong**. And feel we can do them very well. So, as we prayed & fasted as a church & school brd, **this was the answer we believe God gave us**. [what was terrible was the *abrupt timing*]
 3. Appreciate your **prayers** for all who have been effected by this decision.
- F. Prayer: staff/employment. Students/to find a new school home.

II. Slide9 **Intro: *Believing is Seeing* Read Chapter (ESV in chairs)**

- A. Where **theology** meets **history** [*what is being asked? why is there suffering? what is its source? is there **in utero** sin?*] Nothing worse, then watching the suffering of a child, or the suffering of the child's parents.
 1. Jesus firmly **resists** any such analysis of how the world is ordered.
 2. The world is **stranger** than that, **and darker** than that, **and** the light of God's powerful, loving justice shines more **brightly** than that. **But** to understand it all, we have to be prepared to dismantle some of our cherished assumptions and to let God remake them in a different way. NT Wright
 3. We must stop thinking of our world as a moral slot-machine, where people **put in** a coin (a **good** act, or an **evil** one) **and** get out a particular **result** (a reward or a punishment).

4. Being born with a disability doesn't mean you **must have sinned**, says Jesus. **Nor does it mean that your parents must have sinned.** **No:** something **much stranger**, at once **more mysterious** and **more hopeful**, is going on.
 5. The chaos and misery of this present world is, it seems, the raw material out of which the **loving, wise** and **just God** is *making his new creation*.
 6. When Jesus heals this man, John clearly intends us to see the action as one of the moments in the gospel when **God's truth** and **the world's life** (**theology and history**) come rushing together into one.
- B. **Slide10** Big Idea: **Q: Why this healing?** **A:** The *light of the world*, loves bringing **light** to those completely veiled by **darkness**. **And** He does so by grace, through faith, and this not of our own doing, it is the gift of God. **Shown here in 3 ways:** *God has a Purpose for My Life. God has a Plan for My Life. God has a Proclamation for My Life.*

III. **Slide11a** **GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR MY LIFE**

- A. *Cause takes you so far, purpose takes you all the way.* Piper
- B. **Slide11b** God has a wise, good, & Christ-exalting **purpose** for everything that happens to you
- C. This is **#6** out of the **7 signs** (miracles) in John.
 1. Jesus performed more miracles related to **giving sight to the blind**, more than any other miracle.
 2. This was prophesied about Messiah when he would come.
 - a) **Slide11c** Is.35:5 *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.*
- D. **Slide11d** They asked out of curiosity not compassion.
 1. Jesus **saw** a man, the disciples **asked** about him. **Be careful not to look beyond the blind man.**
- E. The question reflected a common belief of the day.
 1. This was really a self-revelation of **their God**. **Does your God act like this?**
 2. **Do you act this way to your children?** [If 1 of your children messes up, do you punish the other 1?]
 3. **In that day it was commonly taught, a fetus could commit sin while in the mother's womb and that it's kicking indicated its sinful state.** Swindoll pg.42

- F. Many parents have asked this very same question when they've had a child born w/a disability. *What did we do?* (it was because we slept together b4 marriage, etc.)
1. Reflects the belief that *congenital disabilities* were the *result of sin* on the part of the individual *or* his parents.
 - a) This way of thinking derived from the desire to avoid making God responsible for afflicting suffering on the innocent. Wicked, sinful behavior led to suffering and punishment. The innocent should not suffer. *Despite the popularity of these beliefs, the Bible does not teach a uniform cause-and-effect relationship between sin and suffering.*
 - b) Eg. the main point of Job is to demonstrate *the theological possibility of righteous-innocent-suffering.*
 2. That may make sense with the Chinese/Taoism's, Yin/Yang, *for every action there is a reaction.* Or Islam's *God willed it* philosophy (i.e. tsunami). Or the rabbis taught that *no one died unless there had been sin.*
 - a) But Jesus here *refutes* this *entire system of thought* in vs.3.
- G. Slide12a (3-5) *That the works of God should be displayed in him. This is actually a short teaching on Christology.* [*not on the result of sin, but on the works of God*]
1. (NLT) *This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.*
 - a) This man's blindness was *not* caused by some *specific sin.* *Instead* the problem existed so that...*God could display His glory in the midst of seeming tragedy.*
 2. Slide12b (msg) *Jesus said, "You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I am the world's Light."*
 3. This man is here, for God to work in His life, in order to glorify Jesus!
 4. *Some people are sick/hurt from sin* (accident drunk driving). *From* their *parents sin* (crack babies). *From Adam's sins*: heredity diseases are passed down. *And* some *just because*...& we don't know why (eg. Job).

- a) Slide12c Remember Ex.4:11 (God to Moses) *Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?*
5. What's your handicap? *You were born what? so the power of God could be seen in you.* What's your obstacle, impairment, hinderance, disadvantage?
- a) Where do you find yourself weak, so He can show Himself strong?
- b) Where do you find yourself utterly useless, where God wants to make you incredibly useful?
6. Ok, so then God always heals like this man? **Obviously not.** Then how does God receive glory in someone, if He doesn't heal them? Ask Joni Erickson Toda who still sits paralyzed (yet has authored 40 books, is a radio host, many paintings, started ministries in the disability community, etc.). Ask Paul the apostle who had to live w/his thorn in the flesh. Ask Job who's children didn't come back to life.
- H. (5) This verse is key on **which** aspect of Jesus' work that it points to.
1. This theme is continued from 8:12. Here it receives demonstration.
 2. What does He reveal about Himself using it here? There is **no sight** w/o **light**.
- I. I wish instead of always wanting to escape this world, we'd own the Jesus model, *as long as I'm in the world, I am the light of the world.*

IV. Slide13a **GOD HAS A PLAN FOR MY LIFE**

- A. **THE HEALING** (6,7)
- B. We were probably 1st introduced to blindness when we were very young, in a very weird Nursery Rhyme called **3 Blind Mice** [now referred to as, *The Tale of the 3 visually impaired small domestic rodents*] :)
- C. He had never seen the color of **water** in Siloam. **Trees** in blossom in northern Israel. Or a golden **sunset** over Galilee. The white or pinkish sandstone that all of Jerusalem was/is made out of. Nor the white marble nor the **bright gold** of the temple he sat outside of begging.
- D. (6) Putting clay on the man's eyes Jesus encouraged him to obey & wash **on the Sab** (14)
1. Slide13b *Sometimes the Lord irritates us before He illuminates us.* [that dog will hunt!]

- E. Here's what we wonder (w/hands raised)...Jesus, Jesus, why clay? why spittle? why that pool specifically?
1. The mud exercise was not medicinal but served as a means for the blind man to put his faith to a severe test. **Would he obey?**
 2. This sign pointed to Jesus as *the giver of spiritual sight*.
- F. (7) **Went, washed, & came back seeing** - The clay now washed away. **Awakened, wonder, hope, expectation, & faith.**
1. It was **a ladder** by which he climbed **from the pit of despair, to the mount of joy.**
- G. **Slide13c NOSEY NEIGHBORS (8-12)** - Hey wait, you look different. **We gave money to you & you're not blind? Wait, were you ever blind? *I think it's him?* Did he have a twin?**
- H. **Would God allow *a brand new seeker* get *pummeled* by hard questions? Would God allow *a brand new believer* get thrown out of church? And **if** He would, **why** would He?**
- I. The blind man must have thought, *wait till everyone hears what happened...but* that wasn't his story.
1. The man was questioned by his **Nearby Nearsighted Neighbors & now** from the Pharisees.
- J. **Slide13d THE PHARISAICAL PHARISEES (13-34)**
- K. (14) **Rabbis taught you could spit on a rock, but not on the ground, for that would be **working** (i.e. it might roll on the dirt & make mud).**
1. ***By this time, years of legalistic accretion had encrusted the original Sabbath laws like barnacles.* William Barclay**
- L. **Slide13e THE PARENTS INTERROGATED (18-23)**
- M. They answered questions 1 & 2, but not #3 for fear of being kicked out of the synagogue.
1. So they plead the 5th on the grounds that would incriminate them.
- N. **Slide13f THE BLIND MAN FURTHER INTERROGATED (24-34)**
- O. (24) **Give God the Glory** – was putting him under oath to extract truth.
- P. **Slide14a (25)** Even if you are 1 day old in the Lord, & feel you don't know anything yet, you can say with assurance, *One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.*
1. ***You may not be an authority on Theology, but you are the world's greatest authority on what has happened to You.* Kent Hughes**

2. Slide14b *A man w/an **experience** is never at the mercy of a man w/only an **argument**.*
3. People can argue **theology & interpretations** but are speechless when confronted w/the reality of a **changed life**.
 - a) *Live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God didn't exist.*¹
 - b) Slide14c Chuck Swindoll asks, *Is your life a cold monument to religious duty, or is it a living mystery?*

V. Slide15a **GOD HAS A PROCLAMATION FOR MY LIFE**

- A. It's interesting that the Pharisees hostility, forced this healed man to realize the moral majesty of Jesus.
 1. So might God give you a pagan professor in college, who loves trashing Christianity...for the purpose of growing your faith roots deeper?
 2. Might God give you an ungodly co-worker, who constantly tries to shipwreck your faith... so you can learn how to make fast your anchor?
 3. God did it for this brand new believer.
- B. Slide15b This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life (vs.3). Don't look at the **pain**, but at its **results**.
- C. (34) *You were born in utter sin - Ouch!* The low blow. The very thing that hurt him the most before his healing, *who sinned this man or his parents?*
 1. So the Pharisees did assume **present liabilities = previous sin**. [only Q: **who?**]
- D. **Excommunication**...equivalent to being excluded from *the community, the gathering place*.
 1. Some churches/synagogues you **want** to be kicked out of.
- E. **IDENTIFICATION** (35-41)
- F. Slide15c (35) Jesus does **Follow up** [Jesus always takes the **initiative**]
- G. *The men of the Temple threw him out, but the Lord of the temple searches him out.*
- H. Jesus **found him!** - *Where was he cast out?...right into the arms of Jesus.*
 1. **Being thrown out isn't always a bad thing.**
 2. It is better to be **cast out**, or to **come out** (from among them) **than** be **spewed out**.

¹ Cardinal Suhard

- I. Now for the 1st time the man **born in darkness** comes face to face w/**the light of the word**.
- J. (38) The healing of the blind man took place on **2 levels**:
1. At the **phys level** his **sight was restored**. On **sp level** he came to **faith on Christ**.
 - a) Now he **sees** w/his **heart** as well as w/his **eyes**.
 - b) He really becomes the model for Jesus' entire ministry.
- K. **Slide15d** That is the **point of the story**. Jesus does the **works** of God. Jesus is the **glory** of God. Jesus is to be **worshipped**.
- L. Let's look at this man's *Proclamation-Progression of faith*:
1. Prv.4:18 NLT, *The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day.*
 2. **Slide16** His 1st gleam of light was in vs.11 stating He was, *a Man called Jesus*.
 3. It got brighter in vs.17 when he said Jesus was, *a Prophet*.
 4. It got brighter still in vs.33 when he said Jesus was, *a Man from God*.
 5. Then the full light of day occurred when he understood Jesus to be, *The Son of Man/God*, in vs.35.
 6. Then the man's, *Lord, I believe!* was the *turning point* in his life. vs.38
- M. The Old axiom goes, *Seeing is Believing*, but here we read that *Believing is Seeing*.
- N. **Slide17a** (40,41) *Are we blind also?* - Hey, *if your transition lenses fit, wear em.* (self-darkening when you step out into sunlight).
1. So now we have seen perfectly illustrated what John said in 1:5 *And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*
 2. The disability of blindness is a good picture of the disability caused by sin.
- O. Well, let's just judge the Pharisees by their own Proclamation/testimony so far:
1. **Slide17b** This Man is not from God (16a). He does not keep the Sabbath (16b). This Man is a sinner(24). & they claim to not be Jesus' disciple, but Moses'(28)
 - a) So yeah, I'd say they're *pretty spiritually blind*.
 - b) He doesn't condemn them by **making** them blind, they **blind themselves** by *rejecting Him*.
- P. There is an interesting contradiction found in this passage. A physically blind man not only gains physical sight but spiritual sight. A group of Pharisees can see physically but are blind spiritually (they of all people should have had spiritual sight).

Q. Slide17c There are none so blind as those who **won't** see.

1. Because you are self-satisfied you are un-healable.
2. *Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus. To reach out and touch him, and say that we love him. Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen. Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus.* Bob Cull

R. Communion:

S. What works of God might be put on display from your life this week?