

## **“What’s Your Blind Spot?”**

John 9:1-40

*Series: Face to Face with Jesus Week 4. The Fearful Meet Jesus*

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Imagine for a moment what it would be like to suddenly see. Max Lucado tells the story of Bob Edens who was blind for fifty-one years.

His world was a black hall of sounds and smells. He felt his way through five decades of darkness. And then, he could see. A skilled surgeon performed a complicated operation and, for the first time, Bob Edens had sight. He found it overwhelming.

“I never would have dreamed that yellow is so ... yellow,” he exclaimed. “I don’t have the words. I am amazed by yellow. But red is my favorite color. I just can’t believe red.

I can see the shape of the moon – and I like nothing better than seeing a jet plane flying across the sky leaving a vapor trail. And of course, sunrises and sunsets. And at night I look at the stars in the sky and the flashing light. You could never know how wonderful everything is.”

He’s right. Those of us who have lived a lifetime with vision can’t know how wonderful it must be to be given sight. But Bob Edens isn’t the only one who has spent a lifetime near something without seeing it. Few are the people who don’t suffer from some form of blindness. Amazing, isn’t it? We can live next to something for a lifetime, but unless we take time to focus on it, it doesn’t become a part of our life. Unless we somehow have our blindness lifted, our world is but a black cave.

One can live near a garden and fail to focus on the splendor of the flower. A man can spend a lifetime with a woman and never pause to look into her soul.

And a person can be all that goodness calls him to be and still never see the Author of life. Being honest or moral or even religious doesn’t necessarily mean we will see him. No. We may see what others see in him. Or we may hear what some say he said. But until we see him for ourselves, until our own sight is given, we may think we see him, having in reality seen only a hazy form in the gray semidarkness.

Have you seen Jesus?<sup>1</sup>

In the spring water of a pool another man blinks and squints at the light reflecting off the water. Like Bob Edens, it is the first time he sees light. He emerges from a lifetime tunnel of total darkness. He was born blind. A skilled master surgeon has just performed the operation – not with scalpel or medicine but with spit and mud and receives vision not only in his eyes but also in his soul.

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<sup>1</sup> Max Lucado, *God Came Near*, (Multnomah Press, 1987, p. 13).

The day starts the same as any other. He takes up his usual place in Jerusalem. It is the Feast of Tabernacles when pilgrims clog the narrow streets. He cries out "Alms for the blind". Such is his life. Begging seems to be the only way he can make a buck. Though many pass by him, occasionally tossing a coin his way, few neighbors actually see him. He is a blind spot in that city.

Those who pass sometimes talk about him as though he is not there. They forget he is blind not deaf. Some say God stole his sight as punishment for sin. A few rabbis even teach a child can sin in the womb. Today his ears catch a group of theology students refer to him as a case study.

Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? John 9:2

The man is annoyed at being treated like a blind laboratory rat in their theological experiment. The Rabbi, however, corrects his students.

Neither this man nor his parents sinned. But this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. John 9:3

The students focus on the cause of his blindness. The Teacher points to the good God can bring from it. The Light of the World is about to shine on him. Their Teacher's words capture his attention. "How can a blind man see the Light of the world?" he wonders. Then, without warning, he feels someone smear a thick muddy paste across his eyes. It stings. "What are you doing?" he cries. "Go," the Rabbi commands, "wash in the pool of Siloam." The beggar would have protested, but there is an authority in the Man's voice.

Onlookers lead the blind man down the hill to the ancient pool of Siloam. Along the way they tell him the Rabbi is the controversial healer from Galilee named Jesus. When he splashes water on his face and wipes the mud away a burning sensation sears through him. Light! For the first time in his life, he sees light. Blurry tones and shadows sharpen into colors he cannot even name, for this is the first time he sees color. With some squinting, he focuses in on flowers, stones, and astonished faces. He cries for joy and stumbles home navigating, for the first time, with his new eyes.

His neighbors do not believe it is him. An argument arises over whether he is truly the once blind beggar or another man who looks like him. Despite seeing him on the street every day they always avoided looking him in the eye. A few are astounded by the miracle. Others dismiss the whole thing. Again and again he cries, "I am the man. I was healed by the one called Jesus." "So where is he now?" the neighbors inquire. "I don't know," he replies, "I never saw his face."

They grab him by the arms and lead him to a gathering of Pharisees. Today is the Sabbath when work is forbidden by the Law of Moses. Some argue this healing violates the Law. "This proves Jesus is a sinner. No man of God would break the Sabbath." But the opposing side wonders, "How can a sinner perform such a miracle?" They turn to the healed man. "He opened your eyes, what do you say about him? Is this Jesus sinner or saint?" Without hesitation the man declares, "He is a prophet from God!" The council explodes in an uproar. "Send for his parents, they will sort this out."

His parents are not much help. They confirm he is their son and he was born blind. But as to how he was healed and by whom, they refuse to comment. "Talk to him, he is old enough to speak for himself." They are afraid the Pharisees will cross their names out of the synagogue roll book. So they choose silence over excommunication. The man does not expect much from his parents. Instead of helping him all those years, they handed him a beggar's cup. Why should they support him now?

Again they question the once blind man. "Tell the truth! Give the glory to God for your healing, not to this sinner and Sabbath breaker." "I don't care whether or not he broke the Sabbath," the man shoots back,

Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see! (John 9:25).

"Tell us again how he opened your eyes," they demand. By now the man has had enough. "You are not listening to me. Why do you keep asking?" he shouts. Then with a smile and a touch of sarcasm he adds, "Do you want to become his disciples too?" At this the assembly explodes with threats and insults, "We are disciples of Moses! God spoke to Moses. We have no idea where this Jesus comes from." "Now that is amazing," the man replies with some pleasure. "I admit God *spoke* to Moses. But it appears God *listens* to this man. How else could he open my eyes?" The Pharisees cannot contain themselves. "How dare you lecture us! You have been a sinner from birth. That's why you were blind." And they cast him out.

There are many blind spots in this tale. **A blind spot may be someone you refuse to see.** The Pharisees are blinded by their refusal to see the Light of the world in Jesus. They have God all figured out. They know what is allowed and what isn't. It's all right there in the rulebook: the Law. Even when a miracle of God stares them in the face with brand new eyes, they bend over backwards to avoid seeing it. They question every possible suspect and witness to prove what they already believe. And when confronted by the truth, they resort to insults and intimidation, excommunication and expulsion. They have a blind spot: they refuse to see.

It is easy to criticize the Pharisees but harder to see our own blind spots. Do you put limits on God? Do you limit God's power by assuming He cannot accomplish miracles today? Do you limit God's presence by saying he can't see what you are doing or by claiming he has abandoned you? Do you say He can't forgive what you've done? Do you only give God your attention on Sunday? What about Monday morning? What about Friday or Saturday night? Do you have God all figured out. You don't need to learn anything more about God in a Growth Group or youth group? Do you refuse to take the next step in your walk with Him? Have you settled into a comfortable predictable God who asks very little of you?

Jesus is the Light of the world. And wherever a light shines it creates both brightness and shadow. When Jesus came into the world, He immediately created division. Nobody remains neutral about him. The Pharisees prove you can be the most religious person of all and still choose the shadow rather than the Light. You can physically see and still be spiritually blind. To them, Jesus is a blinding Light. They prefer to blindly follow the God they create rather than see the Light of the God who created them. Don't keep God in a box. Open your eyes and see what He is doing in your world right now.

**A blind spot may be someone you no longer see.** The parents of the man are blind to the point where they can no longer see their son. There is not a hint of rejoicing when he is healed. They do not defend him at the trial. His parents are so afraid of losing their standing in the synagogue they don't stand by their son. Do you have a blind spot about someone in your life? Someone who hurt you, burdened you, betrayed you? You don't want them to embarrass you in public. You don't even want to see them. You can't look them in the eye. Open your eyes, remove that blind spot. Try to understand why they are the way they are. Try to see them for who they really are. Ask God to help you see them with the eyes of Jesus. Let God shine the Light of the world on that relationship and show you what to do.

**A blind spot may also be someone you avoid seeing.** Jesus' students only see the beggar as a subject for discussion. The neighbors pass him everyday on the street but they never truly look at him. That's why they do not recognize him when he is healed. They avert their eyes whenever they pass his spot. We have the same blind spots in our world. Sometimes we don't see the needs right around us. Like the disciples, we debate the problems of war, hunger, homelessness, racism, injustice, welfare, crime, gun violence, opioids and so on. We go round and around about who is responsible, who's to blame, and what to do until we throw up our hands in frustration. Like the neighbors, we avert our eyes from the tragedies in our global neighborhood. Sometimes the only way to get our attention, the only way to rip off the blinders is to show us pictures of children with distended bellies, of child who are refugees of war, of children sleeping on steam grates. For that brief time we can see past the blind spot. For that short time we are moved to action. But then the pictures are gone, the blinders go back on. The need does not go away when you scroll to the next webpage, when the news cuts to a commercial.

Or perhaps we see physical needs but have a spiritual blind spot. When we see hunger, homelessness, and war we jump into action. Yet we are blind to the spiritual needs of the people around us. Jesus came to have a relationship with everyone. Jesus came to save everyone. Jesus came to love everyone. Jesus came to be the Light for everyone. But we are blind to the spiritual needs of those we know who don't know Him. We don't want to bother them. We don't want to offend them. We don't want to appear arrogant or self-righteous. But we can: Love them. Pray for them. Care for them. Invite them. And let Jesus open their eyes. Jesus did not stop when He gave the man sight in His eyes.

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. John 9:35-38

There are three blind spots we need to remove. The first is Physical Needs Now. Yes, you've seen the horrific pictures from the War in Ukraine. You've heard the news reports. But it is too easy to sigh and then switch the TV channel or click on another website. Several of you have generously given over \$5,000 to our special offering to support the people of Ukraine through World Vision. We can do more. Let's give to provide food, shelter, medicine and the love of God to those driven from their homes by this horrific invasion.

The second blind spots are the Spiritual Needs Now of our family members, friends and neighbors who don't know Jesus, who don't have a church home or who've disconnected from the church during Covid. Pray for the Lord to open your eyes and then to open an

opportunity for you to help Jesus to open their eyes, to invite them to worship during Holy Week and especially on Easter. It would be a tragedy to care for people's physical needs and leave them starving, homeless and dying when it comes to their spiritual needs.

The third blind spot are the Physical and Spiritual Needs from now on. People are hungry, hurting, homeless right near us. People are addicted, uneducated, incarcerated right near us. People are sick, struggling and sorrowful right near us. God wants to unleash the power of the Holy Spirit and send His Church to bring faith, hope and love to our region. That's why, starting on Easter, we will begin preparing to launch the Church Has Left the Building on Pentecost Sunday, June 5. On that weekend Woodside will scatter throughout our area and serve in a variety of mission projects. There will be missions any age can do – families, youth, adults, seniors. We will serve as the hands and feet, the voice and heart of Jesus in such missions as Adopt a Highway, Caring for Friends, Cast Your Cares, Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and more. If you have an idea for a mission, a cause close to your heart you would like to lead, please put it on the Connection Card and we will include it among the list of projects. Then, on the evening of June 5<sup>th</sup>, we'll gather as the Church for worship and a celebration of all God has done.

My hope is the Great Physician Jesus will touch each of our eyes, take away the blindfolds and blind spots and help us to see Him. I pray Jesus will no longer be a shadowy figure from history, but the Guiding Light of our lives.