

**Let There Be Light!**

SERMON TEXT: John 9:1-41

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*Dearly beloved of God, our sermon's text for today is taken from St. John's Gospel.*

*Let us pray...*

*Heavenly Father, we come into your glorious presence this morning in the power of Your Spirit and in the name of Your Son through whom You have made us Your people and by whom You have bestowed upon us the brightness of your Life-giving light. Father, with our eyes fixed upon our Saviour we look to Your Word for revelation and Life. Grant that my words may reflect the light of Your truth alone for only Your Word can pierce this world's sinful veil and dispel the darkness in our hearts and minds. AMEN.*

Darkness. I'm sure that, like me, you can all recall the times when as a child you experienced the emotions it stirred within you as you lay in your bed at night. I know I can. There was always a strange sense of loneliness and abandonment which ran counter to the fact that our parents were usually just next door. The house wasn't empty, but, laying there quietly in the dark, it may as well have been. When the lights went out, the world beyond our bed blinked out of existence, engulfed in black. Our world was limited to what we could see. Oh, sure, there were those shadowy shapes that we could almost discern, but, of course, they never really helped— if anything they only added to the feeling of dread as our young imaginations projected all kinds of fears onto the black canvas before us and all around us. There lingered the irrational, although all too real, sense that we had to fend for ourselves alone, abandoned in darkness until dawn.

Darkness. We didn't like it as children and, at times, we're still uneasy about it as adults. Most children want a night light to keep the darkness at bay and rein in their imagination with the reminder that they are secure in their own room and that they are not alone, but under the very same roof with those who would never abandon them to the night. As God's children, our Father has provided a light to comfort us and remind us that we are not languishing in darkness, neither alone nor abandoned. We need light to see the truth beyond the blindness brought about by the darkness.

"I am the light of the world!" These are Jesus' words to the world. These are the words of the One through whom and for whom all things that have been made were made. These are the words of the incarnate Word who before all worlds cast out the darkness by the declaration that there be light! His light is the Life which the darkness cannot comprehend nor overcome. His light, which is given to enlighten everyone, shines brightly in a world darkened by sin. His light grants sight to those blinded by sin. Jesus said, "I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of Life." Yet, His light also blinds those who refuse to see, as Jesus also said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

Light. It has many unique properties. Its exact nature remains, to this very day, an unsolved mystery— it's been that way ever since the time that the ancient Greeks first pondered its properties twenty-five centuries ago. It baffles mankind's brightest as it demonstrates the behaviour of both particle and wave. Light. It has been used as a metaphor for revelation, goodness, and life throughout many millennia across a myriad of

cultures and religions. Its use in this manner suffuses all of Scripture, focusing upon God's Christ as the source of all revelation, goodness, and life. Light. Its physical properties permit us to observe the world around us while its metaphorical use points us to the world within us and beyond us. The God who created all the physical light in this world sent His Son into this world as a symbol of light shining in the darkness so as to prepare us for the world to come.

In our Gospel lesson, we encounter a man whose whole world since birth was nothing but *darkness*. Physically all he could perceive of the world around him was what he could glean from his other senses. In his day and age, his lot in life was that of a beggar sitting by the outskirts of society's highways and byways waiting for a handout as an outcast. He lived all his life with what we feared as children: he was alone in perpetual darkness. His blindness was seen as a punishment from God against either the sins his parents committed, sins he committed while still in the womb, or in anticipation of the sins he'd one day commit. While the rabbis debated endlessly over the specific cause of his curse, the reality of the man's blindness remained. Well, that would have been the case if God had not had another plan and purpose for this man's plight. For, you see, on a particular Sabbath, almost twenty centuries ago, something unprecedented took place through the life of this blind beggar: the works of God were displayed as a powerful sign for all who had the eyes to see!

*What* Jesus did, along with *how* He did it, served as a specific witness to His identity. Sure, Jesus had previously restored sight to two blind men by touching their eyes, healed another set outside of Jericho with but a word, and gave vision to yet another

in Bethsaida by spitting on his eyes; however, in none of those instances were the men born blind. For the man born blind, Jesus did something unique: He mixed His spittle with the dust of the earth and rubbed it into the man's sightless eyes. Now, as for the use of spittle, there was a belief among the Jews of Jesus' day— a belief handed down from the rabbis and recorded in the Talmud— that the spittle of the first-born son of a father has healing properties. Of course, Jesus is not just *any* first-born son, but the first-born over all creation, the eternal Son of God— all things that were ever made were made through Him and for Him. In fact, the way Jesus blessed this blind beggar takes us back to the beginning as Jesus did not *restore* this man's sight— He formed it! Unlike all of the other creatures on the earth, man was not merely spoken into existence. No, the Bible tells us that God *formed* man from the dust of the earth. In a sense, Jesus' actions take us back to the Book of Genesis as He works with the newly formed mud to make this son of Adam's eyes whole, complete. This work could be nothing less than the work of God Himself! The man could now see! He was no longer blind! He was also not blind to the significance in this sign. His acute hearing had heard enough of God's Word in the synagogue to know that such a miracle bore the stamp of God's action in the world.

Light. It reveals. Through Jesus' action the goodness of God gave this man not only eyes with which to see the world around him, but also a sign revealing the spiritual world about which many are blind. Light. Have you ever been in a dark place for a prolonged period and then suddenly exposed to a bright light? What happened? You were blinded by the contrast. You probably recoiled from the shock. The formerly blind man had little time to process what transpired, before being confronted by those who,

though they possessed physical sight, were spiritually blind to the light. Light has a number of properties. It can, through certain parts of its spectrum, penetrate even solid matter and reveal what lies within. It can be diffuse and gentle or focused and piercing. It can disinfect. It can burn. So we ought not be surprised that in a world of sinners sitting in darkness there are many who would turn away from such light rather than towards it. After all, it exposes much. Jesus said, “Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” Those who would not see the sign set before them feared the light more than the darkness. This is often still the case today.

The Pharisees claimed that they could see that Jesus was a sinner— after all, He even broke *their* Sabbath laws by mixing mud from spittle and dust, which they defined as being akin to the work of kneading dough or making mortar! Since He did not follow the rabbinic rules concerning the proper observance of God’s commandment for the Sabbath, many of the Pharisees concluded, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” See, *here* was the problem. They had placed their faith in the system that *they* erected rather than faithfully watching for God’s promises to be fulfilled in accord with His Word. Their sin blinded them to the obvious working of God before their very eyes. Rather than rejoicing in the miraculous gift which restored a blind beggar to his community, these Pharisees uttered threats against both the man and his parents. These were no idle threats. They threatened to have them cast out of the synagogues under the strongest ban. This would have had the family treated as dead to the community. Now, while this would be a dreadful fate for people with monetary

means, it would spell utter disaster to a poor family like the one to which the once-blind beggar belonged. Nevertheless, the formerly blind man did not spurn the gift of sight, nor did he deny that the miracle had to be of God. He saw things more clearly than those who claimed to see. So, they had him banned. Rather than receive him with rejoicing, they now made him an utter outcast.

Jesus, the light of the world, said, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." Jesus revealed Himself to the man He blessed, and the man believed in Him. Though cast out of the synagogue, he was now received by the very incarnate Word of God. Jesus then turned to those who condemned both this man and his testimony, and said to the Pharisees' who claimed spiritual insight, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." The testimony of God's mighty work with this man witnessed against them. A sign given to those demanding signs was spurned because they loved the darkness more than His light.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus said that by believing in the light, God's revelation, we have become children of the light. St. Paul exhorts us to "walk as children of light" because, as it is written, "at one time [we] were darkness, but now [we] are light in the Lord." In fact, Jesus, the light of the world, says to us, "You are the light of the world." So, while we are in this world we bear witness to who He is and to what He has done so that this truth might draw men out of the darkness toward His glorious light. We are to shine *God's* light in this world: His Law which exposes sin and the Gospel which radiates from the Son. As we do so, we shouldn't be surprised that there will be many in

the world who threaten to cast us out from their midst. After all, as St. Paul tells us, “The god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel that displays the glory of Christ”. Yes, Satan would have us remain in darkness and cowering in fear as little children in the night. God, however, reveals through His Son that we are not forsaken, alone in the dark. He will never abandon us. We can now see clearly, even in this dark world, that we need not fear anything for the Father of lights, with whom there is no shadow of turning, abides with us— not two doors down the hall, but closer than our next breath! As His children every good and perfect gift is ours. This includes the powerful promise that in our prayers we can confidently approach God, who, even though He dwells in unapproachable light, hears us and shines His truth through us. As children of light, let us then pray unceasingly that God, by His Word and our witness, will grant those still sitting in darkness the eyes with which to see His truth and know the perfect love which casts out all fear. In this dark, sinful world, we pray, “Let there be light!” AMEN.