

Title: Light of the World

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Text: John 9:1-38

My First Day

In the dark:

It began just like every other day of my life: *in the dark*.

You see, I was born blind. I didn't know what light was. Morning was a time at the end of sleeping filled with the noise of people stirring and the smell of cooking food. But for me morning and night were all the same. Dark.

I went to my "work," if you can call it that, just like every other day. It meant sitting by the side of the road near one of the city gates with a dirty blanket spread out in front of me, hoping to collect a few coins from passers-by.

My useless eyes stared blankly at the world around me, but just because I couldn't see didn't mean that I couldn't *hear!* Like all blind people, my hearing was my primary way of knowing my world. I heard every rustle of wind, the skittering of every lizard on the ground, the patter of the first raindrop. I heard every conversation of every person who came through the gates of the city.

Funny the things people say about a handicapped person – right in front of him! As if my lack of seeing them meant I couldn't hear them. And on this day I heard a group of men talking about me.

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One of them addressed his teacher: "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" (John 9:2 NIV)

I'd heard that one before, that's for sure. God must have been really mad the day *he* was born! I played along, giving my beggar blanket a little shake: maybe they would at least throw me a few pennies, if I wasn't too cursed, too far gone.

Another day in the dark.

The Pool of Siloam:

Then I heard another voice – the voice of the rabbi. Here it comes, I thought: the sanctimonious verdict. Who will be to blame today? Mom and dad? Or the unborn Me? I heard it all before.

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"Neither," the rabbi said. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:3-4 NIV)

And with that I heard him clear his throat and spit on the ground. I heard him scrape around in the dirt, then I felt him put one hand on the back of my neck while he rubbed the mud he had made from his spit onto my eyes. When he was done, he gave me a command:

"Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam." (John 9:7 NIV) And he was gone.

A rabbi who said I wasn't to blame? A rabbi who said God wanted to do His work in me, a blind beggar? A rabbi who called himself the Light of the World? A rabbi who made mud spit and smeared it all over my useless eyes?

I got up and felt my way down the steep streets to the grand Pool of Siloam. Siloam means "sent," and I was sent on a mission. When I reached the pool, I knelt down to wash my face. I could feel the cool water and the gritty mud as I scrubbed my eyes. One last splash and suddenly: *Light!*

Mysterious Stranger: (just a name)

So what do you do on your first Day of Light? You look; you see!

I walked back up the hill from the Pool of Siloam. It was the *first time* for everything! The stone walls and streets I had known only by stumbles and echoes shone brilliantly in the morning sun. Sparrows and pigeons flashed by, wings humming. And there were the faces, all the faces. Voices connected with smiles, frowns, wrinkled noses, and sparkling eyes.

You also tell your story and get asked a lot of questions!

- **Question:** "Are you the same guy as the blind man who used to sit here and beg?"
- **Answer:** "Yes, I'm the man!"

- **Question:** "What happened?"
- **Answer:** "*The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could I could see.*" (John 9:11 NIV)

- **Question:** "Where is this man?"
- **Answer:** "*I have no idea. Never actually saw him.*"
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My Not So Merry Adventures

My first cross examination:

And that brings me to my "not so merry adventures" on my First Day of Light. Turns out that this Jesus healed me on the Sabbath, the Day of Rest when you're not supposed to do any work of any kind – including healing non-life threatening conditions like congenital blindness. What's another day in the dark, anyway? Especially when you have a religion to run.

So my questioners hustled me into the local synagogue to be checked out by the religious teachers. Maybe they could make some sense out of this amazing event.

Thus my *first* cross-examination. It wasn't pretty.

First I told the story to the religious police. Then some of them rendered an instant verdict:

This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." (John 9:16 NIV)

It turns out that this Jesus had broken a boat-load of rules:

- First, of course, was the rule about healing a non-life threatening condition on the Sabbath.

- Second, making the mud was considered a form of *kneading*, and was strictly forbidden on the Sabbath.
- Third, it was forbidden to anoint your eye on the Sabbath.
- Fourth, it was forbidden to put spit on the eyes on the Sabbath.

No, I'm not making this up. These were the rules these guys had come up with. And this rabbi Jesus had managed to break every single one.

When they couldn't even agree among themselves whether or not this was a God-miracle, they asked my opinion!

I said, "*He is a prophet.*" (John 9:17 NIV)

More witnesses:

The next witnesses to take the stand were my poor parents. They were called to testify that I was really born blind and if so, then why I could see.

They were terrified. They knew that this Jesus was a marked man. Anyone who accepted him as Messiah would be banned from the synagogue. Think of it as social suicide.

So all they could come up with was:

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"We know he is our son, and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." (John 9:20-21 NIV)

I guess I'd already been enough of an embarrassment when it came to that "sin thing." They didn't want any more trouble, so they washed their hands of me.

Final verdict:

I got called back to the stand, as it were, one final time. This time they put me under oath, telling me that they already knew "this man is a sinner."

That was too much. Think about it: You're called a "sinner" when you're born blind. Then when Jesus reverses the blindness and gives you sight, *he is a sinner*. This "sinner thing" caught you both coming and going. I'd had enough of it.

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I said, "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 NIV).

They asked me to tell the whole story all over again – no doubt to trap me in some inconsistency. I really ticked them off by saying,

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"Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" (John 9:27 NIV)

With that they brought the hammer down. They insinuated that Jesus was a false prophet who deceived people with demonic miracles.

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I replied: Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." (John 9:30-33 NIV)

Not what they wanted to hear: they threw the "sin thing" at me one more time just for good measure, and threw me out the door.

Light of the World**Face to face with Jesus:**

How's that for a First Day of Light?

I wandered around town, trying to figure out just *who* this mystery man Jesus was.

- At first he had been no more than a voice with muddy fingers, sending me to wash my face in the Pool of Siloam. All I knew was his name: Jesus.
- But I had come to see that he was more than that: he was a genuine prophet, empowered by the Living God.

- I didn't know all about Sabbath rules, but I *did* know that he had done something no one had ever done before. He must have come from God Himself.

"Lord, I believe!"

And then I felt a hand on my shoulder.

I heard the voice that had changed my world:

It's been quite a day – your First Day of Light! We've seemed to get everyone upset. There's just one more thing: Do you trust the Son of Man?"

My head was spinning. Everything I had taken for granted was upside down. The people I had always trusted would have nothing to do with me. Even my own parents were *embarrassed* that I was no longer blind. But I knew this voice. It was the voice of the man who had given me my sight. It was the voice of this mysterious and controversial Jesus. It was the voice of Messiah.

I answered: *"Who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may put my trust in him."*

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Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." (John 9:37 NIV)

Yes! Mystery solved: the voice in the dark was one and the same with the prophet from God who was now standing in front of me as "Son of Man," God present to repair and judge His world. This was how God did the "sin thing." This was God doing His work – turning my blindness into sight. This was God Himself inviting me to *trust Him, know Him and follow Him.*

I fell on my face in front of Him and said, *"Lord, I believe." (John 38 NIV)*

Light of the World:

What it all comes down to is that we're all blind when it comes to knowing and seeing God. It turns out that my physical blindness was a blessing in disguise. I was down so far I had nowhere to go but up. Darkness or Light? It was an easy decision.

But gaining my sight only started me on my new spiritual journey. It launched me into discovering that "this man called Jesus" was not only a prophet from God, but God Himself, come into our world to make things right.

And most of all, it meant coming to see past the gift of physical seeing. It meant seeing that God loved me so much He chose to turn my blindness into an explosion of grace that would put to death that whole sin curse thing forever.

That is the true glory and splendor God, full of grace and truth.

And I saw *that* glory for myself. You can, too.

Small Group Discussion Notes: Light of the World

Icebreaker:

What *voice* do you most love to listen to?

Tell about a time when hearing that person was especially meaningful to you.

What makes that voice so special?

The Shepherd's voice:

The story of the healing of the man born blind continues with Jesus describing Himself as the Good Shepherd. Read these verses aloud, looking for just how important the Shepherd's voice is:

John 10:1-5 NIV

*"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and **the sheep listen to his voice.***

*He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him **because they know his voice.***

*But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him **because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.**"*

The blind man had never seen anyone's face. He knew everyone through their voice. I would imagine that he could remember voices the way we remember faces.

So imagine just how it must have felt to hear the same Voice that sent him to the Pool of Siloam now asking him to believe in the Son of Man!

He'd heard a lot of angry and confused voices that day. What do you think it felt like for him to hear Jesus' voice?

The "Son of Man"

The term "Son of Man" needs a little explanation.

- At one level it simply means: "a person," "so and so."
- But in the Book of Daniel it is used to describe a heavenly figure through whom God judges the world and repairs His creation.
- Jesus used this term to describe Himself, promising that one day all would see the Son of Man "sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:62 NIV). Those words were enough to have Him condemned to death.

With this in mind, we get a glimpse into Jesus' question to the blind man: "Do you believe in the Son of Man"? We also see why the blind man chose to call Him "Lord" and worshiped Him.

Giving His life for the sheep:

Jesus didn't have to heal the blind man that Sabbath day. He could have left the man in the dark for another day, or forever. He knew that by healing the man two things would happen:

- He would be condemned as a heretic Sabbath-breaker.
- He would display the unique work of God, now present in human form.

Jesus was willing to put His life on the line, regardless of the consequences. He said:

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11 NIV)

Prayer:

In what area of your life do you most need to hear His Voice?

Is it possible that He wants to come to you in the darkest, loneliest, most confusing place? Is it possible He wants to come to you in the place where you feel the most shame or blame?

Take some time to pray for those needs, and listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd.

He knows your name. And you know His.

Good Friday:

I hope you can join us for our Good Friday Service at 7:00 p.m. on March 25th.

