

## **AMAZING GRACE: I ONCE WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE**

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**TEXT:** John 9

When I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, our class at school was called to the nurse's office for our annual eye test. All of us lined up and took turns sitting in her office, before a large sign of letters. I remember that I couldn't read very many letters on the sign. They were all pretty blurry to me. We returned to class and later that day, my memory is that I alone was called to come back to the nurse's office. The nurse handed me a sealed envelope and told me it was very important that I give this letter to my parents when I got home.

Now I will tell you that I really tried to be a "good girl" as I was growing up. I didn't get in trouble with teachers or the principal. But when I was handed that letter from the nurse, my gut instinct was that I was in big trouble. I didn't know what the letter said, and I was really scared to give it to my parents.

Well, when I finally gave the letter to my parents, I discovered that I had failed the eye test. I was in great need of getting glasses. Now you may ask why I hadn't complained about poor eyesight before this. Well, I always sat on the front row! And if anything looked blurry, I just thought that was what everyone else saw! I wasn't in need.

Well, after seeing our eye doctor, I finally got my first pair of glasses. I remember the day I walked out of the office with them on – just like it was yesterday. I looked across the parking lot and saw the words "Sanger Harris" on a store wall, so clearly. And then what was most incredible – were the trees! Wow! I remember saying to my mother, "There are leaves! You can actually see leaves on the trees!" I hadn't remembered ever seeing the actual outline of leaves before – it had been a total blur to me.

When I got back to school, I didn't like how kids called me "four eyes" – but I sure did love being able to see. At times I would lift up my glasses and look at the board with out my glasses on --- and then put my glasses back on! I was amazed; I really was blind but didn't know it. I finally could see!

I once was blind but now I see!

It's a part of our song "Amazing Grace" that we are focusing on throughout our sermon series this Lent. Written by John Newton, 250 years ago, he truly knew what it was like to be blind – blind, living in sin and against the Lord. But one day, his eyes were opened.

In a book of hymnology, we hear this about Newton: *Following in his father's footsteps, Newton began his life's career by searching throughout the African coast for slaves to capture and eventually to sell for profit. On one journey, Newton and his crew encountered a storm that swept some of his men overboard and left others with the likelihood of drowning. With both hands fastened onto the wheel of the boat, Newton cried out to God saying, "Lord, have mercy*

*on us.” After eleven hours of steering, the remainder of the crew found safety with the calming of the storm. From then on, Newton dated March 21 as a day set aside for a time of humiliation, prayer, and praise.<sup>1</sup>*

When he got home, he stopped going on slave ships. Instead, he worked at learning Hebrew and Greek – and eventually he was ordained into the Christian ministry. He was frequently called to give his testimony – to share how this former slave trader was now a man actively working towards abolishing it. And he wrote hymns – describing that conversion.

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see!*

John Newton, of course, referred to that Lost Son – in our message we heard last week about the son who was lost but brought back home by the amazing grace of the Father. And now, today, we hear those words in our text today, from John 9:25 – *“I know this: I was blind, and now I see!”*

The blind man healed in John 9 wasn't the first blind person Jesus healed. In fact, He healed all together 8 different folks – and what is interesting is that no two were alike. In some cases Jesus healed the blind just by speaking the word, “Receive your sight!”. With others, He would touch their eyes – and in one case, He actually spit on the blind man's eyes. And all those stories of those healings, found throughout the gospels, are usually told with just 2-3 verses.

But today's healing of a blind man is very different. Open up your Bibles to the Gospel of John and turn to chapter 9. This story of the blind man is told, not in just 2-3 verses – but actually takes up the whole chapter to tell the story – 41 verses! This obviously was an important story that John wanted to make sure we knew all the details. Now I don't have time to read all 41 verses and comment on each verse. So here's your homework – I am hoping you will take the time today or sometime this week to read all the verses and reflect on their meaning for you. This story is full of drama – and full of great theological lessons we need to hear.

But for now – I want to go over just the highlights and just a couple of lessons that I think we can learn from this story.

First – our suffering can show God's power and glory!

Our story opens at verse 1 with the disciples and Jesus seeing a blind man, begging alongside the road. The Disciples ask Jesus, “Why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?” They were looking for the cause of the suffering – someone or something to blame. But Jesus is quick to answer: *“It was not because of his sins nor his parents' sins. This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.”* While sometimes suffering can be because of someone's sin or evil action – not *all* suffering is directly caused by some personal sin. In the case of this blind man – Jesus wanted the disciples to know that sometimes our suffering is an opportunity for God to display His power and goodness in his life.

God was going to work through this blind man to show God's power and to show that Jesus was indeed the Messiah who could give sight to the blind.

We are often like the disciples, trying to figure out why bad things happen to us – why we have to suffer – wanting to blame someone or something. But, as the Life Application Bible says, *“Regardless of the reasons for our suffering, Jesus has the power to help us deal with it. When you suffer from a disease, tragedy or disability, try not to ask, Why did this happen to me? What did I do wrong? Instead, ask God to give you strength for the trial and a clearer perspective on what is happening.”*<sup>2</sup> It very well could be, that God is giving you a platform from which you can be a witness to a watching world of God's power and grace. Think of it as an opportunity – not a disaster. It is an opportunity for people to see God at work in your life – helping you, giving you strength to make it through.

Nick Vujicic (voy-a-chich) is a person who read John 9 and got a new perspective on how God might use his suffering to help others. Let's listen to him tell a part of his story: show video (<https://youtu.be/SYuVx2LU5QM>)

Nick says that when we fall down – when we struggle and suffer - God will come down and pick you up. God will give us His amazing grace – and that grace is vision. He will give you strength to get back up. Nick says, “If I can trust in God with my circumstances, then you can trust in God with your circumstances. . . . The greatest joy of all is having Jesus Christ in my life and living the godly purpose He has for me.”<sup>3</sup> How wonderful to see God's amazing grace at work in his life.

Jesus reaches out to the blind man and gives him amazing grace by healing his blindness. In John 9:6, we read that *“(Jesus) spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. He then told him “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam (which means “sent”). So, the man went and came back seeing!”*

Now this isn't a picture we normally think of – Jesus spitting on the ground – making mud – and then putting it on a person's eyes. As someone says, it gives a whole new meaning to the phrase - “mud in your eye”!

Just try to put yourself in the blind man's shoes. What would you be thinking? Notice, the blind man had not spoken a word yet; he hadn't called out to Jesus and begged for Him to come and heal him. He really knew next to nothing about this man - he only knew the name of Jesus. Imagine what he was thinking as Jesus spread that mud across his eyelids. He had to have a lot of trust and belief in Jesus, I think, to go down to the Pool of Siloam and wash his eyes. He could have chosen to stay seated there. But he received his sight - not because he earned it or deserved it, found it or understood it all – but he received his sight because he trusted the One who touched him and he obeyed the One who sent him. The word for this is GRACE. He received his sight because of God's amazing grace!

You know nothing has changed. Jesus is still in the business of giving sight to the blind. He wants to give us vision so that we might walk in the light, and not in the darkness. He wants us to have a vision of victory over death – and peace over despair. He wants to free us from the

power of sin – and accept the gift of new life as we trust in Jesus. And Jesus will do whatever it takes to get to us and open our eyes to see the finished work of Christ on the cross – and receive the gift of amazing grace. And our response is to be just as this blind man – to trust and obey.

Now if you know the rest of the story in John 9 – it wasn't easy for the blind man after he received his sight. His neighbors didn't believe him, his parents didn't stand up for him and the religious leaders interrogated him and cursed him and eventually threw him out of the synagogue. Who was there to defend him?

The answer comes in verse 35. It says, "When Jesus heard what had happened, He found the man." Isn't that wonderful – Jesus – the Son of God and Creator of the universe – took the time to find this once blind man. Jesus cares and takes care of us! He does not leave us alone. Once we give our hearts to Jesus, He watches over us and protects us. While we may have to face some persecution once we give our lives to Christ - no one can ever take away the eternal life that Jesus gives. In fact, Jesus says, *"I give them eternal life and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and He is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand."* (John 10:28-29)

Jesus asks the man – "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The man answered, "Who is He sir? I want to believe in Him." "You have seen Him," Jesus said, "and He is speaking to you." "Yes Lord, I believe," the man said and he worshipped Jesus.

That's the question He asks of each and everyone of us this day. He sees us all – and knows exactly what struggles and trials we are going through. He sees you through and through and knows there are places in our lives where we are blind and unsure what the purpose is for our life. He's inviting you to do what this blind man did – to trust in Him and give your heart to follow Him. He wants to create a miracle in your life – to help you to see His amazing grace and to live for Him. Won't you do as this blind man did? Trust and obey – and then boldly go and tell a broken and hurting world, "I once was blind, but now I see"!

## PRAYER & INVITATION

## RESOURCES

<sup>1</sup>Geneva College Bulletin, "Hymnology: The Story Behind "Amazing Grace"  
<https://www.geneva.edu/blog/uncategorized/hymnology-amazing-grace>

<sup>2</sup>Life Application Bible, page 1773.

<sup>3</sup>Dave Branon, *True Trust*, Our Daily Bread, May 14, 2008.  
<https://odb.org/US/2008/05/14/true-trust>