

## Session Eleven: Introduction to The Cure of the Blind Man

### Opening Prayer

#### Introductory Points:

- We arrived at the sixth sign out of seven.
- This sign and the next sign are heard in church at least every third Lent so they are well known.
- They are dramatic, they are powerful.

#### Covering it in this series:

- This sign of the curing of the blind man we will again treat across three sessions.
  - This first session will be devoted almost entirely to context and background because if we don't understand a bit about what is going on around this sign, we miss a lot of what makes it so ingenious.
  - Second session (number 12) we will walk through main outlines of the story to learn what it, along with its background, reveals about who Jesus is and what our response should be to him.
  - Third session (13) will be lessons from this story.

#### Where are we at in the Bible?

- The sign itself takes up all of John Chapter 9.
- However, we will do a bit of background work on Chapters 7 and 8 as well because they set the stage for the main themes of this sign.
- We will omit the opening of Chapter 10 on the Good Shepherd even though it is technically the dialogue that concludes this sign.

#### Really quick re-cap:

- Recall that we are still working our way through festivals as John presents Jesus as the fulfillment and replacement of them.
- Jesus' origins are divine, and he brings the fullness of life, abundance, grace.
- His Word is powerful, and he does the Work of God, including the work of forgiving, healing, and feeding.

#### Critical Background One: The Pool of Siloam, Gihon Spring, Temple

- Earthly water that gives life and makes Jerusalem possible. Everyone knew what that pool meant.
- Intermittent spring; pool is a reservoir to catch the over flow. Name means "sent" because the spring's water is sent there.
- Part of the rituals of the temple
- The road down to the pool- some distance and some descent.

#### Critical Background Two: The Feast of Tabernacles

- Time of the year: harvest, the fall
- Multi day festival 7 days plus an extra 8<sup>th</sup> celebration day, like a sabbath. Required pilgrim festival along with Passover and Pentecost for which all adult males must come to Jerusalem annually.
- What is the feast? Booths, commemorate time in wilderness living in shelters, but also a rain festival for newly planted crops to bring in the rainy season (our winter time). Involves pouring water from the pool of Siloam (which gives life to the city) on the temple altar to thank God for rain, to ask God for rain). Priests would process down to the pool each day of the feast and bring water back up to the

temple altar in a golden pitcher. They pour the water into wine cups on the altar so that wine and water would flow out together.

- Involves lighting four enormous torches in the outer court of the temple to light up the night. Celebrates messianic promise of the end of time when the night shall be as clear as day- no more night or dark. Pillar of fire in the desert journey.
- Principle symbols of the feast:
- Rain, harvest, water
- Light: the torches and lamps lit up.

### **Critical Background Three: Key comments of Jesus in chapters 7 and 8.**

#### *At the Feast:*

- Chapter 7 opens by explaining Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, though he explains he is going to go in secret because the temple authorities have grown so forceful in their resistance to his message.
- This puts him now in the final Fall of the year before he dies in the coming spring.

#### *Origins and the Work of God*

- He teaches in the temple when the feast is already half over and starts arguments about his origins (where is he truly from), and about his authority to cure on the sabbath.
- "If you can circumcise on the sabbath, surely I can cure on a sabbath."

#### *Living Waters:*

- On the last, 8th day of the feast, after the water and light rituals cease the day prior, he exclaims in the temple: "if you are thirsty, come to me and drink! Rivers of living water will flow within the one who does."

#### *Light of the World:*

- Chapter 8 we find Jesus continuing his comments at the end of the Feast: I am the light of the world. I do not judge by appearances.
- I come to offer freedom from slavery to sin.
- He identifies himself with the same God of Abraham and says of himself "I am."
- That closes the chapter.

#### *Re-cap of key themes:*

- At a festival revolving around water for the harvest, and the torches of light,
- At the temple and its nearby pool of Siloam
- Jesus explains he is: water, he is light, he does the work of God to heal even on the sabbath, that he is from God, that he sets free from slavery to sin and the blindness of bad judgment.

With that we are ready for the events of chapter 9 which are the sign itself and the aftermath that follows.

### **End of Session Eleven**