

- I. Review the different parts of this story
 - A. John 9:6-7 . . . When [Jesus] had said this (*We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world*), He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to [th blind man's] eyes, [7] and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.
 - B. Today, we are going to finish John 9, and in the process, we will look at evangelism in relation to three types of unbelievers, we will consider the weaknesses of building a religious life on tradition and theology, we will talk about the power of culture to influence the people in that culture, and finally, I want to talk about regret.
 - C. Pray
- II. Common worldly responses to the works of God, the light of Christ, and evangelism
 - A. Evangelism when dealing with unbelievers who are uncertain, skeptical, disbelieving, and wanting proof.
 1. Before reading John 9:8-12, I want to direct our attention to 1 Peter 3:13-17 because it is a portion of scripture that describes the mindset, tone, attitude, and demeanor of the evangelist: "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, [15] but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence (*Profound respect and esteem mingled with fear and affection – Webster's 1913 Unabridged English Dictionary*). [16] and keep a good conscience (*be careful to live a godly life*) so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. [17] For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."
 2. John 9:8-12 . . . Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" [9] Others were saying, "This is he," still others were

saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one." [10] So they were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" [11] He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." [12] They said to him, "Where is [this Jesus]?" He said, "I do not know."

3. Some of these neighbors were uncertain, some were skeptical, and some were in disbelief that such a miracle could ever take place. And, it seems that most of them wanted some form of proof that what was being claimed actually happened.
 - a. In my opinion, it is reasonable to assume that these neighbors were unbelievers. In other words, they were Jews by birth whose knowledge of God and faith in God were far more the result of their culture and religious traditions than a living, personal encounter with God and faith in God.
 - b. And though the numbers of unbelievers with a Christian religious background are diminishing in our country, there still remains a large number of unbelievers who have some religious background in some religion just like these neighbors of the man born blind.
 - c. And that means we are likely to encounter unbelievers like this among our extended family members, neighbors, co-workers, and various other people we meet along the way each day.
4. And yet, in spite of having a religious background, many unbelievers are uncertain about Christianity being the only true religion. They are skeptical about the Bible being the word of God. And they have a hard time believing it is a rational, sensible thing to believe in our God and live according to His word as we do.
5. My point here is that these folks are not outright rejecting God, just not convinced in the reality or reasonableness of God. They are not opposed to God or religion, just not interested in Christianity as the religion of choice. And they are not hostile toward God or Christians in general, but rather they are satisfied with life as they have it – which is a life without God, and without the truths and morality contained in God's word.
6. So what are we to do? We are to treat them with respect, and show compassionate understanding toward their resistance to the gospel. We are to gently deal with their skepticism toward believing in God and living according to God's will. We are to patiently deal with their questions and calmly discuss the truth of God's word with them.

- a. At the same time, we must never compromise the truth, yet we ought also avoid giving unnecessary offense when speaking about those truths that they find offensive or out of touch with their perspective of good and evil.
 - b. We are to encourage them to think, ponder, and consider what we have said, and invite them to continue the discussion at a later time. And it is good to invite them into our homes or some other setting where they can see godly people in action.
 - c. In other words, we are to be honest yet gentle, straight forward yet understanding and merciful, uncompromising with God's truth yet kind and loving when presenting God's truth. And above all, we are to live what we speak.
 7. This approach to unbelievers may not result in many repenting and coming to faith, but it will honor God, be an example of godly Christianity, and show them the respect and love due them.
- B. Skipping down to vs 18-21, we will look at evangelism in the face of intentional unbelief and rejection of the truth.
1. John 9:18-21 . . . The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight, [19] and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" [20] His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; [21] but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself."
 2. Those who purposefully reject God, who purposefully reject our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and who purposefully reject the truth of scripture are rejecting God, Jesus Christ, and truth for a purpose.
 - a. For example, these Jews did not want to accept Jesus as God's Messiah, and they did want to see God in what Jesus was doing, because if they did it would mean approving of Jesus, agreeing with His teachings, and humbling themselves under His leadership – which in turn would mean losing the influence, prestige, and power they held over the people and the religious system. And in addition, it could mean a reduction in their income. There are things they did not want to lose, which means they wanted them more than God and the truth of God.
 - b. Therefore, they were not uncertain or skeptical or in disbelief that Jesus was from God and by God's power could do such things.

They were intentionally rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and as God's son on earth in order to hold on to the influence, power, prestige, and financial gain they had as religious leaders.

- c. In other words, they were purposeful their rejection because their rejection had a purpose behind it.
3. And in the same way, the unbelievers who are purposefully rejecting God and His truth are doing so for a purpose.
 - a. Therefore, just as Jesus spoke to the evils of the religious leaders' purposes for rejecting Him, so we should speak to the ungodly purposes of the unbelievers who are purposefully rejecting Jesus and the truths of scripture.
 - b. For example, there are those who reject God and God's word because they do not want to lose the sinful and selfish life-style they are living. There are those who reject God and His word because they don't want to blame themselves and humanity in general for the troubles in the world – they want to push that blame on God.
 4. In other words, when dealing with intentional unbelievers – those who reject God and God's truth, we ought to follow Jesus' example and speak more forcefully, more pointedly, more condemningly while pointing out the discrepancy in their position, the irrationalness in their thinking, and the hypocrisy in their living. And yet, all this is to be done in a gracious, respectful manner that demonstrates the love, patience, grace, and mercy of God in the face of evil.
- C. Once again we will skip down to vs 24-34 where we see that one of the outcomes of intentional unbelief and the rejection of truth is hostility toward Jesus and those who believe in Jesus. However, I will only read portions of this section.
1. John 9:24-28,34 . . . So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." [25] He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." [26] So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" [27] He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?" [28] They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. [34] They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

2. Some unbelievers are hostile toward God, the Christian faith, and Christians themselves. I believe it is worth making an effort to see if we can break through their hostility and gain their ear, and maybe even their mind and heart. Yet it seems that such efforts rarely produce the desired results.
 3. Therefore, after making some effort to break through the hostility, the best action is to move on, just as Jesus told His disciples to move on if the folks in the town where they were began to persecute them. And why move on? Because, Jesus said, there are many more towns with unbelievers who are not hostile and who still need to hear the gospel (Matthew 10:23).
- D. There is a great weakness in building your religious/spiritual life on tradition and theology rather than the word of God.
1. John 9:13-16 . . . They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. [14] Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. [15] Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." [16] Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them.
 2. Though there is much good to be gained from theology and religious tradition, the weakness of them both is that they tend to emphasize parts of the Bible, and parts of church life, and parts of the Christian life while minimizing or even ignoring other equally important parts of the Bible, church life, and the Christian life.
 3. The Pharisees were so committed to promoting and protecting their theology and traditions related to the Sabbath that all they could see was Jesus' failure to keep the Sabbath while being blind to the mercy and kindness of God in using Jesus to heal a man born blind – even though it was the Sabbath.
 4. I am reasonably certain that their emphasis and accompanying blindness seemed right and spiritually mature to them – as it does to all who hold their theology and religious traditions in ways similar to these Pharisees. But Jesus exposed its weakness when He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things

you should have done without neglecting the others. [24] You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:23-24).

5. The point here is that when our theology and traditions take priority over justice, mercy, faithfulness, loving others as we love ourselves, kindness, loving our enemies, and humility – just to name some non-negotiable aspects of a godly life – then we are holding to the wrong theology and keeping ungodly traditions.
- E. Jumping ahead to vs 22-23, we see the power of culture and religion to keep people in line with the beliefs and practices of that culture and religion. And as I spoke about in prior weeks, this can be for good or for ill, depending on whom and what the culture and religion are protecting.
1. John 9:22-23 . . . His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed [Jesus] to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. [23] For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."
 2. I am pointing this out today to remind all of us to beware of using such pressure to get our own way or to protect our little group from unwanted changes or challenges that we don't like or want or to preserve our positions or our power or our prestige or our financial well-being.
 3. Therefore, we must beware of being like the Pharisees and the other religious leaders who were using this form of influence and control to promote and protect their interests rather than God's interests, for that is an evil use of a culture's and religion's influence.
- F. Beware of what you claim to be for God will expect you to live according to what you claim, and if you don't, He will hold you accountable.
1. John 9:39-41 . . . And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." [40] Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" [41] Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

III. Conclusion

- A. As stated at the beginning, I want to conclude today's teaching with a look at regret. We all have participated in and possibly still participate in earthly, fleshly, and worldly ways of thinking, choosing, speaking, and

behaving that if we do not abandon them and replace them with godly thinking, decision making, speaking, and ways of behaving before we die, we will regret after passing from this life to the next.

- B. Jesus spoke about this in His parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man regretted his life-style after he died, and his regret was so real that he knew his brothers would regret the way they were living one day, too. So he wanted God to send Lazarus back to warn his brothers.
 - 1. This past week, two men shot each other at close range, supposedly because they were fighting over a woman. One man was only 25 years old and the other only 39. One was shot in the head and the other in the chest, and both died at the scene of the confrontation. Now I am confident that as they awoke on the other side of life, they both regretted their choices and behavior in that situation.
 - 2. In a similar way, I believe the Pharisees who were determined to get rid of Jesus and stop the crowds from following Him – if they never repented in this life – regretted their choices and behavior after leaving this world for the next.
- C. However, these are obvious examples, and it is not these kind of obvious examples of regret that I am encouraging you to think about, but rather the less obvious but still regrettable examples.
 - 1. For example, what decisions, choices, ways of thinking, ways of dealing with those near and dear, habits, or repetitive behaviors are you engaged in which, if you thought about them honestly and with a long-term perspective, you would agree – while still living in this life – are foolish and regrettable?
 - 2. Which passions, fears, longings, appetites, or pleasures will you one day regret? Are there resentments, bitterness, anger, or even hatred that you are holding on to – which you will regret having done one day? Are you clinging to any double standards, self-protective behaviors, areas of selfishness, or unresolved conflicts – for if not repented of and made right in this life, you will have regret one day?
- D. And this list could go on and on, but I will leave it up to you to consider further this matter of regret. And so my final word on this matter of regret is, be wise, start today to deal with everything you might regret one day so that when that day comes, your only regret is not having dealt with these things sooner.