

Introduction: Pg. ____ // The Why of Sermon Videos

This morning before we jump into John 9, I'm really excited to share a development that has been in the works for quite sometime. You may have noticed video equipment...

Why are we eager to implement this? Because you and I have friends who choose not to come to church primarily because of misconceptions or misguided expectations based on bad experiences in the past. People often expect boredom, irrelevance, and guilt. We believe we can help overcome this by providing a preview through the use of video. Fear is created by the unknown. Giving someone a look at what to expect can help remove those fears and create excitement about what we experience every week as Redemption Hill Church.

Additionally, sermon videos will enable people who miss a Sunday to watch, provide clips for equipping and outreach, enhance our current preaching through evaluation, train future leaders, and it communicates to Greater Boston that we are striving to capitalize on the digital age. In short, we believe it will help us enhance our mission to help more people become followers of Jesus.

I want to thank our Deacon of Audio/Visual Technology, Seth Placke, who has served more hours than he probably is comfortable admitting, helping us work out the details and maximize our move to the Chevalier Theatre. Seth and his team do a great job every week, and Seth has orchestrated our addition of video with another one of our A/V Team Members, Dave Hoogewerff who is going to be running point on much of the execution each week. Let's give it up for those guys and our A/V Team!

If you were to look up the most popular hymns, that is songs sung by the church, over the past 250 years, there is one song that stands at the top of most every list: John Newton's "Amazing Grace."

The hymn begins and ends with these words: "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."

The poetic simplicity describing God's gift salvation to ordinary people, like you and me, is extremely powerful.

But here's a challenge for us: Nearly all of us here today find it next to impossible to identify with the thought of being blind... Sure, many of us live with imperfect vision... [I love to tell people the story of when I discovered I needed corrective lenses. It was my second year of graduate school, I was 23 years old.]

BUT it is extremely difficult to consider what it would be to live with physical blindness, but what about spiritual blindness?

This morning we are going to hear the fascinating story of Jesus healing a man who was blind from birth, highlights not only how Jesus has the power to reverse physical blindness, but especially how he wants to bring spiritual sight to the spiritual blind, as John Newton so eloquently put it.

“Sight.”
John 9:1-41

I. Join Jesus in the Great Work of his Kingdom

Still in Jerusalem. Jesus just escaped being Stoned at the hands of the religious leaders who were not thrilled that he was claiming to be God.

Jesus came to reverse the effects of suffering.

- *Read 1-7*
- Jesus Steps into Suffering and does the Work of God.
- The Problem of Pain & Suffering riddles our lives from the cradle to the grave.
- The disciples ask the questions we ask: Why is he suffering?
 - Is it because of his sin? He was born this way. How could he be responsible?
 - Is it because of his parents' sin? Perhaps he is suffering because his parents lived a life that did not honor God.
- Why suffering? You've asked this question before. Perhaps you're asking it today.
 - Why do bad things happen to good people?
 - Why did they die so young?
 - Why did that child not grow up with a father figure and food on the table?
 - Why did my loved one get diagnosed with cancer?
- Here's part of the answer:
 - The world is sick. But God is the healer. The world is inglorious. But I am glorious.
 - At one level, all suffering is a result of sin, *but not* necessarily personal sin.
 - The first few chapters of the Bible explain this. When our first parents deviated from God's standard, death & disharmony entered our world.
- But here's the good news of Christianity...
 - In Christianity, you do not have a God who steps away from suffering but a God who steps into suffering.
 - With Jesus, you do not have a Savior who seeks to be served or take from humanity, but a God who seeks to serve and do something for humanity.
 - In Jesus you have a God who actually suffers that there might be an end one day to all suffering. (Col 1 - unite all things in him/reconcile all things in him).
- Jesus says, this man's sickness is designed to display the works of God.
 - Whoa... How? Keep reading.

Follow along with me as I read the rest of the story and provide some comments along the way. **Read 7-12**

- First, his own neighbors People couldn't believe it! And if we were in their shoes, we would have thought the same thing (7-12).
 - It looks like him. It's him. It CAN'T be him! Blind people do not become seeing people.
 - But he kept insisting, "I am the man!"
 - How? The man named Jesus (gotta love that, he) opened my eyes!
- Second, they bring the Pharisees to him (13-23)
 - **Read 13-23**
 - These religious leaders tried to discount the work of Jesus in numerous ways.
 - They first try to deny it. Then they try to denounce the source of the miracle.
 - They were really upset Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath. They even resort to calling Jesus a sinner.

- The religious leaders added extra, man-made rules as to what could and could not be done on the Jewish day of worship and rest.
- But as Jesus is quoted in the gospels right before John in the Bible: The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. I am Lord of the Sabbath, and I will show you how to worship God by doing good whenever the opportunity arises.
- Then they tried to put pressure on his parents with the fear they could be kicked out of the religious community if they sided with Jesus.
- The story gets worse. Rather than rejoicing that this man received his sight, they continue to interrogate him, but what happens in the process is that they reveal the darkness of their own hearts. (24-34)
 - **Read 24-34.**
 - Because of their personal pride, these *religious* leaders, the ones who should have known better and acted better, could not see the wonders of God right before their eyes.
 - This exchange is priceless. The blind man points to their failure to believe that Jesus has empowered by God to be the most amazing aspect of the story! After all, we're talking about an event that had never happened before!
 - He even asks if they want to be his disciples, which they did *not* appreciate.
 - Have you ever been so into you that you missed the wonders of God right in front of you?
 - The greatest barrier to experiencing the wonders of God is the barrier of me.
- The story ends with him being cast out by the Pharisees. On the day of his liberation from physical suffering there should have been great celebration, these religious scumbags inflict social and emotional suffering on the formerly blind man.

T: But the story does not really end there. The Jews cast him out, but Jesus went to bring him in. **Read 35-38.**

Jesus came to display the coming Kingdom of God.

- In all of his actions and all of his speech, Jesus gave a picture of how things ought to be and how things are going to be.
- Shalom - Flourishing, Fullness, Harmony - In the Garden (beginning) and In the new heavens and new earth (end)
- Cornelius Plantinga Jr. defines shalom as . . . ***“universal flourishing, wholeness and delight – a rich state of affairs . . . the way things ought to be.”***
- This was the mission of Jesus Messiah, and he displayed this in radical ways with these miracles that John calls “signs.”
- A sign is meant to point to a greater reality.
 - This sign in particular validates his claim in John 8 to be “the Light of the world.”
 - Jesus said he came so “that those who do not see may see.” Every time Jesus gives someone sight, it is a picture of the kingdom of God coming in our midst.

T: It is paramount that we understand how Jesus work shows us what his kingdom is like. . .

II. Join Jesus in the Great Work of Giving Sight to the blind!

Jesus healing physical blindness (we see in vv. 1-7) points to the greater glory of how he heals our spiritual blindness (as we see in vv. 35ff). So if we get to join Jesus in this work, it begs two questions: How do people receive spiritual sight and what part do we play?

How do receive people receive spiritual sight?

- 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 explains this as good as any portion of the Bible.
- **The Light of the Gospel:** “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:1-2)
- **The Blinding Work of Satan:** “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)
- **The Overpowering Light of Christ:** “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:5-6)
 - Without the gift of light, there is no gift of sight.
 - Once the light shines in our hearts, and we (as Jonathan Edwards explained) not only understand but come to actually come to delight in what Christ has done for us.
 - And by faith, with the eyes of our hearts finally seeing ourselves who we are apart from him, and Christ for who he is as our Savior, receives the gift of God through him.
 - We like the formerly blind man, say: “Lord, I believe.” And we worship. Is that you?

In this story, we are presented with two groups of people: the open & the obstinate.

- The open are humble; the obstinate proud.
- The open are willing to learn and have their perspective changed; the obstinate know and remain unmoved.
- Are we, who are quick to criticize our political leaders for their arrogance and narrow-mindedness, humble enough to have our own perspectives questioned and illuminated?

Are you humble enough to see how your boundless need is met in the boundless love and grace of Jesus? What he did in his life, death and resurrection is enough to restore shalom to our lives and usher us into eternity with him forever.

How can we join Jesus in the work?

Shine Light... with your Life so others can Experience Jesus

- As those who follow Jesus, we now get to show the world little pictures of God's kingdom when we work in his name. I look forward to exploring this with you on Sunday. I also look forward to unveiling a surprise we've been working on for quite sometime!
- **Kingdom Imprint - “a documented occasion when a believer meets a physical need in the community and attaches the credit to the grace of Jesus Christ.”**
 - Example: Buy someone's groceries... I've got to tell you, God has been so generous to me through Jesus.
 - Example: Stay after work to help a new employee learn the ropes...
 - Example: Help a neighbor move in... James Dirosa...

- When we were flying home last week (yes, this was just before I almost lost my wallet; no lost wallets this week, if you are keeping score), we were going through security and there were a couple of girls in front of us who had an awesome quote on the back of their jackets: It said “B corporation - *using business as a force for good*™.” Here’s their vision: “one day all companies will compete to be *best for the world*” and society will enjoy a more shared and durable prosperity for all.
- That’s who we want to be: “A force for Good.” We want to be the at our best for the good of our city.
- Every time we put a meal on the table or bind up a wound or counsel someone out of their addiction, you know what is going on? We are giving them preview of life in God’s city that is to Come.
- Let’s move forward with a sense urgency... (verse 4)

T: Shine Light...with your Life for others to experience Christ, *and* with that...

Shine Light with your Words and Explain Why Jesus Came

- Experience & Explain - That’s the rhythm... We’ve talked about displaying and declare, I still like that
- This is not as complicated as we make it. *We all have a story.*
- Look back at verse 24-25: “We know that this man is a sinner.” The blind man: I don’t know about all of that; I just know that I could not see and now I can see.”
- How simple is that? “I couldn’t see... Now, I can see.”
 - Sharing the story of Jesus is all about helping people see what they don’t currently see. It’s about enlightenment.
 - Perspectives and how you now see differently is such a great place to start. Does he change the way you see work? Does he change the way you see forgiveness? Does he change the way you put others before yourself? Does he transform how you see the outcast and the refugee?
- I see different therefore I live different and I can live different because I am different.
- And it’s all because of Jesus. I follow him, and I seek to live as he lives because he’s changed me.
- “A Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments.” (Adrian Rodgers)
- Can I pull out one observation for us? (& I want this to transform the way I live this week) — When we experience the power of Jesus *and* recognize how much he’s done for us, there should be no greater privilege in our lives that to tell that story.
- Recognizing the Grace we’ve received fuels our desire to help others receive that same grace.

Invite - **2020 Vision**

- The List - This is Our Time. Backstory.... PRAY! The longer I walk with Christ, the more I realize: nothing great happens apart from prayer.
 - Faneuil Hall
 - Easter Egg Hunt: Medford Eggstravaganza
 - Easter Sunday
 - Take these invite cards... Grab some extra ones!
 - I believe most everyone of us can get one person to join us on Easter... I think we can come really close to averaging that...
- And this usually happens over time....

- People usually do not come to believe in Jesus through lightning bolt experiences. It's not - hear the gospel for the first time and then BANG! Although God can do that.
- We want to CELEBRATE 35 people becoming new followers of Jesus this year. You know how it's going to happen? Through a series of experiences, and conversations, and questions, and doubts, and light bulbs going off. This should take the pressure off...
Expound...
- Even in this story we see a series of steps. . .
 - He has an encounter with Jesus, get healed, but doesn't even truly know who he just encountered (isn't that how it works with people today? How many people have told me, if I would have only known sooner... They needed light!)
 - He first confesses Jesus as a prophet (9:17)
 - He then defends him before the Pharisees who were calling him "a sinner." (9:25)
 - Next, in an ironic twist, the not-yet disciple asks the Pharisees if they would like to be Jesus' disciples (9:27)
 - He then argues that Jesus is "from God" and proceeds to correct their doctrine in (9:30-33)
 - Finally, after hearing the gospel from Jesus, that he is the Son of Man, he confesses Jesus as Lord and worships him (9:38). This is the only time where it is explicitly stated someone is worshipping Jesus. (*Pattern noted in Morris, 432; Kostenberger, 278)

How can you shine the light of Christ with your life and with your words this Easter season? Here's the invitation...

Jesus invites us to **JOIN {HIM} Jesus in HIS work of bringing his Light to everyone.**

Conclusion:

It's going to happen through him. It's all about him.... Like Lecrae said: "Jesus. Jesus. Jesus."

- How do we share: Jesus is our Power
- What do we share: Jesus is our Message.
- Why do we share: Jesus is Worthy.

Beholding him. Living for him. Serving him. Bringing others to him. So they might experience the joy of HIM!

Pray.