

John chapters 9-11

Ch 10:14 ... I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”¹⁹ The Jews who heard these words were again divided.²⁰ Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?”²¹ But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”



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Broken things getting fixed

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Good morning

Well I'm Carol, one of the preaching team here. Grab a Bible and turn to p1076 That sort of area. Cos we're looking at a few things that this guy called Jesus did.

So I'll pray and then we'll get to work.

“Lord Jesus, we want to come close to you this morning – help us hear your words, see your face, and humble ourselves before your glory. Amen”

Well today we're looking at broken things getting fixed.

Do you find it annoying when things get broken?

Anyone? Yes. Anyone had things break this week?

India's Commonwealth games organisers come to mind – don't they! The weightlifting venue! They were just trying to lift up the roof, using all their might ... and it collapsed under its own weight!

But we wouldn't have that problem in Britain would we?

That wouldn't happen in Britain would it! British building is solid isn't it. We have British regulations, belt and braces, aren't we us Britains. And we have British inspectors and British standards, and workers – solid, reliable, non-striking, ... Polish workers we have for our buildings don't we. Sorted. Job done.

But when it comes to broken things -Jesus is very good at fixing them. Particularly things no-one else can fix! Are there things in your life that need fixing?

And on screen we've already seen some eye witness accounts of the power of Jesus to transform lives; we're going to look at another two examples now, and later over coffee there's people in this room who can tell of their real experiences of Jesus' power. You'll spot them because the joy of Jesus just spills out from them. It's so great!

Chapter 9 v1 in your Bibles.

As he went along, Jesus sees a man blind from birth, a beggar, and people were wondering whose fault is it. Why has it happened? Had his parents done bad stuff and they were punished by having a blind son, or had the man himself somehow done bad stuff

And maybe in your life there are things like this – one of your family is disabled and is not having a good quality of life as most people would measure it. Why? Why has it happened?

Maybe your child died. Why – was it something bad I had done? Was it good things that I didn't do enough of – whose fault was it?

Jesus said: *“Neither”*. Neither his parents nor the man had done things, that led to God somehow punishing them with the man's blindness. God's not like that!

He was born with broken eyes and it was nobody's fault! It was nobody's fault. Maybe you need to hear that this morning.

(pause)

However clever scientists may feel they are getting in any generation – the control God's allowed us have over things in the world only goes so far. Some things like a man born blind are beyond our control.

But we find that hard because we like to fix things ourself.

...

So this man is born blind, lets imagine it. he's been in darkness since birth. he can hear the birds but not see them, he can smell the flowers but not see them. His parents, he can hear their voices and touch them but he's never seen their faces.

(pause)

We were having Mexican the other day – do you like Mexican? When I was growing up I'd never had Mexican – just the odd Indian or Chinese. But at Uni in Sheffield, when I was about 20, a friend of Barry's called Ross, invited some people round and that was the food. He was a great character,

a Christian guy who smoked! There wasn't many of them at our church! Anyway he'd made his own guacamole and there was soured cream and lettuce and peppers and grated cheese and the wraps and the Mexican chicken sauce. All laid on the table of this post grad student house.

And I hadn't got a clue what you did with it all! *(Pause) Put the warp on the bottom or on the top!*

So I just had to hang back and watch other people so I didn't look stupid. But the taste! Was incredible! It's so great how all those flavours and the colours and the textures all work together so perfectly. That's proof there is a God on its own I think!

But the blind man, he could have enjoyed Mexican wraps but not so much! He would have had the great taste but not the colours – the vibrant red, and the green, and the orangey spicey chicken with the white sour cream!

Too bad!

And there's another broken guy I want you to meet.

Ch11 v11 p1077

One of Jesus' friends, a follower called Lazarus got seriously ill, and Jesus didn't go straight away to Him. Jesus bluntly says v14, he's glad he wasn't there so his friends will believe.

This guy is more than broken, he's in a darker place than the blind man. He's stone cold, metabolically challenged,deceasedHe's dead! Basically.

And been dead for four days!

On a scale of 0-10 with broken at one end and living life to the full at the other no-one could blame you for guessing - he's a zero! He's in real darkness no birds no flowers no chance to eat Mexican, Simon Cowell isn't even on any of the channels down there!

So there's two broken people that Jesus comes across.

Now what about us? Do we need fixing?

Maybe you're thinking: I'm not blind. My body isn't dead yet, but maybe other bits of you are broken, things you can't fix. Dodgy back, relationship, someone close to you who's ill.

At the end of the service there'll be people just here who can pray for those things. Really encourage you to get those things prayed for cos Jesus can fix things.

Or maybe you're thinking – No I'm fine. I don't need Jesus to fix anything for me.
(pause)

Here's a mug I made, well I painted it. Do you like it?

It's my favourite mug actually, I really love it. I love how the design turned out. You can't tell when you put the coloured glaze on how it will look, but when it came through the post after being fired, it came out even better than I expected!

And it's got a lot of sentimental value too which is why I love it all the more and it's so special. I made it in a pottery cafe in St Ives on a holiday in Cornwall a year and bit ago and it was on a special afternoon with Isobel my oldest daughter. And we hadn't had time to plan what to do but walking along the quaint streets on that summer afternoon we stumbled across this pottery cafe and it just ticked all the boxes.

We had a great couple of hours and she painted a beautiful dolphin statue, all turquoise leaping out of dark blue waves, and I painted this mug. In the end it was all quite pricey, and we had to pay for the items to be sent back to London. But it was worth it. And for the last year and a bit numerous tea breaks have been brightened up by this mug and the memories of making it.

And you've probably guessed I'm showing it to you with sadness because what you might not have been able to see from there is that it has a crack in it now.

Just last week it got knocked and it cracked! And I was really upset. It was likely to happen, I knew that, but the pain isn't any less. It's now on a shelf and it still looks OK from a distance but it isn't fit for purpose – I can't use it as it was designed to be used. It has a fatal flaw.

And I hate that crack in it, if there was a way to get it totally fixed again I would do it – but I don't think it can be fixed! And I could do another mug, but it wouldn't be the same, that one was unique and I

loved that one! And I do still love the mug, it is the same beautiful mug I made, but I hate the crack in it I hate it so much because it has spoiled something which to me was perfect, and because I can't use it anymore for what I designed it for. And I could go on ... (smile)

(pause)
And you know this is how God looks at us.

(pause) (big pause)
God knows how, at the same time, to love in each of us what He has made, and hate what we have made.

(pause) That's from Augustine.

Paul says, although we knew God we neither glorified Him or gave thanks to Him, so our thinking became futile and our foolish hearts were darkened.

The world we live in is not the perfect world God that God designed. The relationship between God and people has been broken ever since the first people doubted God knew best, and disobeyed his good instruction. And all people ever after now by nature rebel against God, I rebel against God, and strive to get glory for ourselves rather than give glory to God.

We may also have been born with broken eyes, or legs or hearts as well as bodies that wear out and die in a few decades, but we are much more fundamentally broken than that, though it often feel shard for us to admit to it!

For the second half, we'll look at three ways the Bible says people respond to that – three ways they live. See which one best describes where you're currently at.

First we can be a slave to our culture. (slide) We think, well yes I'm not perfect but so what?! I'm enjoying lots of things that make me feel good – I'll go after them!

Adverts, TV and films try to tell us what will make us feel good and we copy them as best we can, acquiring more stuff that all the smiling faces on the screen have; or trying to save up for better homes, holidays in New York and stuff.

Maybe we cling to hopes of a Lottery win or getting on X factor because that would passport us into a world where money wasn't an object and we could get more of what makes us feel good. A lot us in Britain are slaves to trying to make ourselves feel good. Trying our best to make ourselves happy!

A study in the New Scientist magazine a few years , looked at more than 65 countries and said the happiest people in the worlds live in Nigeria, and the least happy in Romania. So if you want to be happy move to Nigeria.

Anyone from Nigeria here? Were you happier there that here?

But in western countries including Britain, happiness over the past 60 years has stayed exactly level. So despite all the improvements in health-care, medicines, poverty, average incomes, amount of possessions, technology, and cars, planes etc people are no happier.

Which sort of sets you thinking really doesn't it. What's the point of all that stuff then! Anyway

Trying to find happiness is like trying to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow isn't it? The harder you try to reach it, the further it seems beyond your grasp. Have you found that?

And celebrities back this up too don't they. They would seem to have it all, every reason to be happy, and yet as soon as you hear of a new singer – it seems to be only 6 months later they're in rehab – like part of the career. It's really sad. Colleen and Wayne that's so sad. Poor Colleen.

I want to write to her. Jesus can fix things for them. They need to do our Alpha course. I'll write and invite them! Then you'd all want to do Alpha if they come!

The second way to live is to be a slave to some sort of religion. And I use word in it's broadest sense. Religion, is following a set of rules or superstitions and this comes in lots of different forms

There's new age stuff like finding the real you, and Oprah. Work it girl. Get your identity, find your confidence, and show 'em sista! I know I'm broken, but I'm proud of who I am and ain't nobody gonna take that from me! Been watching Oprah too much.

Or Kaballah, Scientology etc. Some celebs get into those religions – Gwyneth Paltrow's now giving out spiritual tips on her website - perhaps the blind man and dead Lazarus would have got helped by that! Except they couldn't see of course!

You see religion is where you decide on which sort of little god you want, if he's even called that, and how often you're prepared to do things for Him, like meditate, or repeat the power of positive thinking, or get to mass each week, or get your kids done, or Feng Shui your garden, or have a little Buddha on your gatepost. And your offerings to your god hang like little charms on a charm bracelet and

somehow you bargain on getting a few little blessings, a bit of fate, a bit of leverage with whoever's out there. Trying through our own efforts to impress God. *Maybe that's you?*

But you can never do enough. In our reading Jesus gets really angry with the religious leaders of his day, he calls them all kinds of names, and he won't tolerate them at all, because they heap extra burdens on people which just lead to death! And religion seems to creep so easily into some churches and into each of us if we're not careful. Causing people to associate Jesus with dead boring traditions and joyless duty and obligation!

And maybe that was you? You've been put off Jesus because of dry dead irrelevant services at school, or when you used to go to Church before. And as part of the church I apologise for that! It's not on! I'll call it out!

Here's something for free: Religion in churches is easy to spot – there's no joy in Jesus, no life, but the smell of death. People seem more interested in perpetuating an outward show of traditions from the past, and they don't seem to have a personal relationship with Jesus. The name of Jesus doesn't crop up that much in conversations with them – but rather grumbles about how people aren't keeping to their little rules or ceremonies. The glory of God, the big picture, has departed.

Religion is like poison as one author puts it. Life sapping poison. It leads to death. And Jesus doesn't mince his words. In our reading you'll have noticed he calls these religious people who've got to be leaders in God's flock - thieves. Thieves who destroy people.

So lets have some good news!

"I am the Gate" Jesus says in v9 of our reading. *"Whoever enters through me will be saved."* This is the third way to live and it leads life.

Just come to Jesus and let him fix you.

That's it.
Jesus can fix things.

Even the fundamental flaw we're all born with – the crack in the mug – our sinful nature that has turned away from our loving Creator God. He can fix that.

Only Jesus can fix this, he's the only person who's ever lived who can fix that. **Muhammed can't, Ghandi can't, the Dalai Lama can't, Tony Blair can't!Ricki lake can't!**

Jesus is the only one who can fix that, Why? Because he was the only one who wasn't broken to start off with!

He's the only one **qualified** to sort the mess. Other leaders are like hired hands who don't care about you and run away at the first sign of trouble. But Jesus says "*I am the Good Shepherd – I lay down my life for the sheep.*"

And he did that! He laid down his life, let his enemies kill him because it was God's will that he be the perfect sacrifice. The perfect one became broken. He took all our sin onto himself on the cross. Put himself in the firing line for our punishment!

It was love for you that held him on that cross – not the nails!

But he didn't stay dead – 3 days later he rose again – for 40 days his friends got to be with him again and then he went up in the sky to heaven where he is now.

But he says he's still near to each one of us – what are you going to say to Him today?

We're going to wrap things up. Turn with me to Chapter 9 v5 "*While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. Having said this he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.*" And Jesus sent him to wash and the man came home seeing. His eyes had been opened!

Jesus has healed the man born blind. Ordered the flesh to change from broken to perfect!

Ch 11 v41 "*So they took away the stone, then Jesus looked up and said " Father I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of people standing here – that they may believe that you sent me. When he had said this Jesus called in a loud voice, Lazarus come out. The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face."*

Blind man says "Now I see" Now I see Now I see
Dead Lazarus says I'm alive I'm alive I'm alive

Blind man says "Now I see" Now I see Now I see
Dead Lazarus says I'm alive I'm alive I'm alive

And there's not an echo in here!

They each got healed twice by Jesus!

The first healing – just really the demo. Just the free 30 day trial version of God's power in a way. The real thing is much much better and doesn't end – you've got it forever – it never stops working even when our physical bodies die. Because of Jesus God can look upon me as perfect!

When Jesus caught up with the man **formerly known as blind** later that day, 9 v35, Jesus asks him if he believes in the Son of Man - a Old Testament prophesied heavenly figure trusted by God with authority glory and power.

And he says who is he – tell me and I will believe in him.

And Jesus says I am Him You've now seen him – he's the one speaking with you.

And the man worships Him, just is at his feet, humbling himself cos this man is not a normal man he is not from this earth – he has super powers, he has authority over things in creation – he is God!

We need to humble ourselves before Jesus today.

Time of quiet. I'm going to say a prayer of coming to Jesus. And if you want to repeat the sentences in your head to Jesus it's a good way of telling him you want to start trusting him.

*Jesus I want to come closer to you this morning.
I know I've not been going my own way, and not God's way.
I'm really sorry. I believe you are God's Son, and I want to have life to the full with you.
Please forgive me for all the wrong I have done.
Thank you for dying on the cross to take my punishment.
Please put both your power and your words to work in my life from now on.
Amen*

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