

JOHN 9:35-41—“THE BOTTOM LINE”

INTRO.: We’ve all heard the term “The Bottom Line.” Financial term relating to a company’s net income or net worth—the gross revenue is listed, then all the expenses are subtracted, and when there is nothing left to subtract you are left with “the bottom line” (the net income, profit or loss).

B/g in the 1970s the term began to be widely used in a broader way. It means: “the ultimate result; the upshot; the main point; or the most important thing.” For example:

- Your favorite team may play well or they may play poorly. But *the bottom line* in any sports contest: win or lose.
- Or, you go to a supermarket to buy food. When you get to the check-out will the check-out person let you take the food home if you explain to him or her what a nice person you are? Or how hungry you are? Or how much you want it? NO. *The bottom line* is: Do you have enough money to pay for it.
- In every MORAL and SPIRITUAL choice we make confronts us with a more basic *bottom line*—namely, with what kind of person we are:
 - Am I going to cheat on my spouse? “But he/she’s not meeting my needs any more, and this other person is really attractive, and cares about me, and I love him/her.” Maybe all that’s true, but if you do *the bottom line* of your life is that you are an adulterer, you’re untrustworthy b/c you can’t keep even the most solemn vows you have made, and you’re incredibly shallow b/c you put temporary physical pleasure over loyalty, family, and a lifetime of commitment.
 - Money: We all want it. We all need it. No one here is starving. Many are doing very well. But how many of us are dissatisfied?
 - Or look at our lives: Something inside us tells us that, however much we have or however well we do, the bottom line is that *it’s not quite enough.*

Today’s passage confronts us with the ultimate “bottom line” of our lives. Context: **John 9:1** Jesus saw a man born blind, and he healed him so the man could now see. Instead of having a big party, the man was brought before the religious leaders of Israel, the Pharisees. Now the Pharisees had decided that anyone who said that Jesus was the Messiah (the anointed one from God whose coming had been prophesied in the OT and whom all Israel was waiting for) would be thrown out of the synagogue. To the Jews, the synagogue was the most important institution in life especially in a village: it had profound religious and social importance. Now Jesus had healed this man on the Sabbath, which the Pharisees didn’t like. So the Pharisees questioned this man:

READ 9:29-34. That brings us to today’s passage: **READ JOHN 9:35-41.**

PROPOSITION: What is this passage telling us? *Jesus is the bottom line.* Or, to put it another way: *Whether we are, or are not, in right relationship with Jesus is the ultimate bottom line of our life.*

ORG. SENTENCE: We see *the bottom line* in: (1) Who Jesus is; (2) What Jesus does; and (3) Our response to who He is and what He does.

I. Who is Jesus?

A. Throughout this entire book of John we have seen that Jesus is UNIQUE: there is no one in all of history like Him.

1. **John 1:29**—Jesus is unique b/c he is “**the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**”
2. **John 3**—Jesus is unique b/c he is the **Son of God** who gives eternal life to those who believe in him.

B. But here, John 9:35, Jesus asks: “Do you believe in the Son of MAN?” In fact, in the Gospels Jesus calls himself the “SOM” ~80x. By far the most common designation of Jesus. That’s important—WHY?

1. It is imp. b/c the “SOM” is a Messianic title that comes from Dan 7:13-14: READ Dan 7:13-14.

When Jesus calls himself the SOM, he is saying that *He* has everlasting dominion over the entire world—*He* is the Lord over “*all peoples and nations*” of every language whatsoever. No one else has ever made that claim (at least with any credibility at all): not Muhammad; not Buddha; not anyone—but Jesus did.

- Think about it: That claim; Jesus status as the SOM; that everlasting dominion; that position; that power; that authority—was not limited to when Jesus was alive on this earth 2000 years ago. By his resurrection from the dead Jesus proved that what he said is true. He is alive today. And He has just as much has everlasting dominion, power, and authority over the entire world today as when he made that statement in **John 9.** That is **THE BOTTOM LINE.** And that is *the bottom line*

that everyone in this room HAS to confront and deal with.

2. Jesus' calling himself the SOM also is important b/c it tells us something important about his nature, and how he relates to us. Jesus didn't go around saying, "I'm God, so you'd better watch out, or I'll turn you into a newt—or worse—at the snap of my fingers!" NO. He's the "SOM." He's the one, only, true, omnipotent, God of the universe—that is true. BUT he b/c a MAN. He lived with us. He was born and grew up. He had a real body. He had to eat and sleep and go to school. He worked with his hands. And more than that. He lived as a poor man, in a little village, as a member of a despised people. He never owned a house or a car or an iPod. And he suffered. Despite all the good he did—like healing this blind man—he was misunderstood, persecuted by the people with money and power, unjustly accused to the government, then condemned, beaten, and put to death.

- All this means that Jesus empathizes with us in our human condition. Yes, he knew times of joy: weddings and parties. But he was "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." Whatever you are going through He knows. B/c he's been there. He experienced it personally. B/c He is the SOM. That's **THE BOTTOM LINE.**

So that's who Jesus is.

II. What does Jesus do?—What He DOES is based on who He IS

v.35: *Jesus does 3 things here:* He "hears" what happened to this man; he "finds" him; and he confronts him with a question.

A. He "hears" what happened to the man and he "finds" him.

1. Jesus didn't just tell his disciples: "You know that blind guy I healed, I heard they threw him out of the synagogue. What a bummer! As I always say: 'No good deed goes unpunished.'" NO. He went out and found the man.
2. This is why I say that what Jesus DOES is based on who He IS, b/c what Jesus does reveals what He is. Just like what we do reveals what we are.
3. What do we learn from this?
 - First, that Jesus KNOWS. Remember: He is the SOM. He is the Lord over all creation. He is alive today. He is not limited by space and time. Whatever it is we are going through, He knows.
 - Second, Jesus doesn't just KNOW, but He CARES. He is concerned about our welfare, both in our temporal existence now in this life, and our eternal welfare in the eternal life that everyone of us will have.
 - Therefore, third, Jesus ACTS. He takes the initiative to come to us. Sometimes he comes in a vision or a dream. Generally, he acts through his people—His body on earth. He comes to us in and through His Word—the Bible. He is speaking to us now through His Word as I discuss **John 9:35-41.** *Do we have ears to hear what He is saying to us, and then apply what He says in our lives?*

B. But when Jesus comes to us, He confronts us, just like he did to the man in John 9. And he confronts us with THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION THAT ALL OF US FACE OR EVER WILL FACE: "**DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SOM?**"

- It is the most important question b/c how we answer that question is a matter of our life or death. That's **THE BOTTOM LINE.**
- The reason why is b/c of who Jesus is—He is the SOM: so we HAVE to deal with Him and ans. His Q.
- To NOT explicitly deal with Him and ans. His Q. IS to implicitly deal with Him and ans. His Q. But if that's how we deal with Him, we're answering it the wrong way, and the consequences will be disastrous.

So Jesus is the SOM. He knows our situation. He comes to us. And He confronts us with the most important question we will ever face.

III. What is our response to who He is and what He does.

In this passage, we see 2 responses: the response of the man who had been born blind, and the response of the Pharisees.

A. The blind man's response. READ JOHN 9:35b-38

1. Jesus' Q is not designed simply to get us to intellectually assent to a proposition. In other words, He is not asking us to respond, "Yes, I believe that you are the SOM; you have presented clear and convincing evidence" but that fact makes no difference in our lives. **Jas 2:19** tells us that "the demons believe that, and shudder."

2. **NO.** The blind man knew the point of the Q, when it says: **“Lord I believe—and he WORSHIPED Him.”**
3. **So, What is worship?** Worship primarily is an inward attitude that pervades all of our life. Worship is our *response* to who Christ is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. The essence of worship is being satisfied with God in Christ.
- Paul puts it this way in **Phil 1:20-21**: **“Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”**
 - True worship takes place during all of our lives, not just on Sundays. **Col 3:23** summarizes this by saying, **“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men”**
 - There is a broad aspect of worship (i.e., living for God and service to him in all of our lives), and a narrow aspect of worship (i.e., coming together as a corporate body to worship the Lord). The two are related
 - Jesus was asked “What is the greatest commandment.” He said “the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and the 2nd is like it: to love your neighbor as yourself. On these 2 commands the entire Bible is based.
 - The Apostles James says: “If you tell someone, go in peace, be warm and filled, but do nothing to actually help the person, what kind of faith is that? It’s DEAD faith. In other words, it is NOT saving faith.
 - **1 John 4:20: “If someone says ‘I love God’ and hates his brother he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen CANNOT love God whom he has not seen.”**
 - What the Bible tells us is this: How we do the 2nd Commandment (loving your neighbor) is the outward and visible sign of whether we really are doing the 1st Commandment (loving God). In other words, how we tx. people shows what we really think of God, b/c people are made in the image of God. *We worship the Lord in vain if our narrow worship is not accompanied by the broad.*
4. **Like the blind man, we worship Christ for who He is—He is the SOM.**
- We worship Christ for what He has done—He has forgiven all of our sins, and has paid the penalty for our sin to reconcile us with God the Father.
 - We worship Christ for what He is doing—for those who are His He comes to live inside of us in the person of the HS; He gives us new life; He gives us His mind; He opens up His Word; He replaces our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh.
 - We worship Christ for what He will do—He will take us to be with Himself; b/c He has raised from the dead, He will raise us from the dead; He will defeat all evil, and we will live forever with nothing but joy and fulfillment with Him on the new earth.
 - We worship the SOM: b/c Christ alone—out of everyone and everything else in the universe—is *worthy* of our worship. That’s **THE BOTTOM LINE.**

B. The Pharisees’ response. READ JOHN 9:39-41

1. This is not Jesus the “meek and mild,” with his hair perfect and parted down the middle, like so many people caricature Him as. That is why I said earlier that Jesus confronts us with the most important Q. we will ever face, and how we answer it is a matter of life and death.
2. In John 3:17 Jesus said: “God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” Here Jesus says, **“For judgment I came into this world.”**
- Is He contradicting Himself? NO. I think He’s smart enough not to contradict Himself on such a fundamental matter.
 - Then what’s going on? One writer puts it this way [Carson, quoting Bultmann]: **“He came to save, not condemn. But saving some entails condemning others. In that derivative sense, Jesus has indeed come for judgment. This is the paradox: In order to be grace it must uncover sin; he who resists this binds himself to his sin.”** And whoever clings to his sin will be judged for his sin.
3. What about the blind seeing and those who see b/c’g blind? **READ CARSON p. 378 “At the spiritual level, the blind refers to those who are in spiritual darkness, and therefore lost, and know it. Jesus came to open their eyes, to give them the ‘light’ of revelation that will enable them to see. But those who see (which is Jesus’ cryptic and ironic way of saying ‘those who think they see’), like the Pharisees in this chapter who make so many confident pronouncements but who are profoundly wrong, inevitably reject the true light when it comes. So certain are they that they can see, they utterly reject any suggestion to the contrary, and thereby confirm their own darkness.”**
4. Many people today say: “I’m not like those Pharisees. They were proud and arrogant and oppressive.

But there are *many roads* that lead to God, and it's inherently narrow-minded to say that there is only one way."

- I agree that: we should not be proud, arrogant, or oppressive; we should not be narrow-minded; and there is much to learn from many traditions.
- However, people who talk like that are really saying: "We KNOW that 'many roads' lead to God." Oh yeah—How do you know that? They are really saying: "My particular, Western, post-enlightenment, culturally-determined way of looking at metaphysical issues is the correct one, and therefore, by definition, anyone who disagrees with me is narrow-minded and wrong." What they are really saying is: "I know more than Jesus about these things." "I'm right, and Jesus is wrong" when He said "**I am THE (exclusive) way, THE truth, and THE life. No one comes to the Father except through ME**" (John 14:6).

5. Agnosticism, Atheism, New Age Spirituality, are just as narrow as X'ianity or any other belief system. Even the statement that "there is no absolute truth" is, in fact, a statement of absolute truth. The denial of Jesus' claim to be **THE way, THE truth, and THE life** is an implicit affirmation that Jesus is NOT **THE way, THE truth, and THE life**. Such people think they see; but they do not see; they think they are wise and broadminded, but they are not. [READ] "**So certain are they that they see that they utterly reject any suggestion to the contrary—and they thereby confirm their own darkness and blindness.**" IOW: *Such people are following in the footsteps of the Pharisees even while condemning the Pharisees.*

6. What we do about Jesus reveals what we are and thereby the judgment that is already ours. As He said in **John 3:18: "He who believes in Him is not judged, but he who does not believe has been judged already, b/c he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."**

- Jesus puts the Q. and the choice before each one of us. Our response to Him shows whether we have a heart of stone or a heart of flesh. That's **THE BOTTOM LINE**.

CONCLUSION: Two weeks ago during the prayer and praise time Donna Mulder told us about a woman who for her whole life had been anti-Christian, and had an estranged relationship with her Christian daughter b/c of it. Then the woman was diagnosed with cancer. And the daughter, acting like a Christian should, took her into her house and cared for her for the last 2 years of the mother's life. Being confronted with a dread disease and the prospect of her own mortality was **THE BOTTOM LINE** for that woman. But by God's grace, when confronted with **THE BOTTOM LINE**, she did repent, she did "believe in the SOM," and it transformed her life. For the last 2 years of her life she lived well, and then she died well.

- Don't let it take cancer to cause you to explicitly deal with Jesus and the Q. He puts to us: "Do you believe in the SOM?" God has given you the grace NOW, while you are of sound mind and body, to "believe and worship" Him—and thereby to make a big difference in your own life, and in your corner of the world.
- For those of us who have already done that, let me conclude with 2 final remarks:
 - (1) *This story serves as a warning as much to those of us who take Jesus' name as to those who do not.* WHY? B/c in our country, we DON'T have to pay the price that the blind man had to pay for believing in Jesus and following Him. We don't get put out of the synagogue. In fact, some Christian business people use their Christianity as a way to make money. But remember—Look at who Jesus chose: The blind man over the leaders (the Pharisees); the poor and oppressed over the rich and powerful. Beware. Jesus is not fooled by lip-service.
 - (2) *We are called to very seriously evaluate our relationship with Jesus.* Jesus said, "**Each tree is known by its own fruit**" (Luke 6:44). Do we really WORSHIP Jesus? I mean both the *broad* form of worship and the *narrow* form? In our own corner of the world, with the people God has put into our lives, what does that look like? What SHOULD it look like? We must think deeply about this and how we should respond to Jesus in our life. *Make the changes you know you have to make to manifest true worship of the SOM.* What is the one thing you know you have to change? Who is the one person God is bringing to your mind? Someone you need to apologize to. Someone you need to forgive. Someone you need to reach out to. Someone who needs your help. DO IT. Make that one change. Jesus *enables us* to do it, because for those who really are His, He lives inside of us and empowers us by His Spirit. How can we *not*, since Jesus is the SOM who has done it all for us?
- Jesus knows us. He has come to us. He is confronting us. How we respond to Him will manifest the judgment that He has of us. That's **THE BOTTOM LINE**.