



# Calvary of Albuquerque

## The Truth About Your Neighbors - John 9:13-34

From the Series, Believe:879

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### MESSAGE SUMMARY

Those of us who are Christians live in a sea of unbelievers who work with us, live next to us, shop where we shop, and send their kids to the same schools. Some have a mild case of unbelief disguised by religious practices. Others are more demonstrable in their agnosticism or atheism. Let's watch a local Jerusalem neighborhood struggle against faith in spite of clear evidence.

### OUTLINE

- I. Unbelievers Can be Ceremonial (vv. 13-17)
- II. Unbelievers Can be Skeptical (vv. 18-25)
- III. Unbelievers Can be Irrational (vv. 26-33)
- IV. Unbelievers Can be Inflexible (v. 34)



### Making it More Than a Sermon:

1. What was your neighborhood like growing up? Did you know most of the kids on your block and their parents? Were most of the people believers or unbelievers?
2. Do you think the Pharisees had already decided that Jesus was guilty or were they honestly looking for evidence? What's the difference between honest and dishonest unbelief?
3. When have you been most severely questioned about your faith? How did you do under pressure? If you are ever in that situation again, what would you do differently?

### DETAILED NOTES

Our neighbors are the people across the street, across town, or across the globe. In this passage, one key issue is involved: a blind man who can now see. His life has been altered by a single touch from Jesus Christ. What does everyone else do with that? Instead of joy, they respond with skepticism, rancor, intractability, and anger.

What does the unbelieving world think of us?

Percent of Americans who would not like the following minorities as neighbors:

Catholics 1%

Protestants 2%

Jews 3%

Hispanics 9%

Unmarried Couples 12%

Blacks 13%

Religious Fundamentalists 13%

"Christianity is the most ridiculous, the most absurd, and bloody religion that had ever infected the world." -Voltaire

"Religion is the most malevolent of all mind viruses"-Arthur Clarke

"Christianity is a religion for losers..."-Ted Turner

- I. Unbelievers Can be Ceremonial (vv. 13-17)
  - A. Love rituals, ceremonies, practice observances, law, hide behind church, but don't believe in Jesus Christ
  - B. They-those who lived in area of the beggar
  - C. Brought him to the Pharisees, it was the Sabbath—is this okay?
    1. Mishna-outlined 39 rules concerning the Sabbath
      - a. Couldn't walk out of the house if sandals had nails, carrying nails, bearing a burden
      - b. Forbidden to heal-only help in a life-threatening situation
      - c. Couldn't knead dough or clay-that was doing labor
      - d. Couldn't spit on the ground, if spit rolls in dirt, makes a furrow, work
    2. Maimonides - not lawful to put spittle on the eyelids
    3. Everything Jesus did was forbidden by their laws
  - D. Jesus healed on the Sabbath seven times

1. Matthew 12:9-13: man in the synagogue with a withered hand
  2. Mark 1:21-28: demoniac in the synagogue
  3. Mark 1:29-31: Peter's mother-in-law healed
  4. Luke 14:1-6: man with dropsy
  5. John 5:1-16: paralytic man at the pool of Bethesda
  6. John 9: 1-7: blind man
- E. People who love policy over people, strain a gnat and swallow the camel-Matthew 23:24
- F. "All religions have been made by men." "Religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quiet."-Napoleon Bonaparte
- II. Unbelievers Can be Skeptical (vv. 18-25)
- A. Pharisees not satisfied with personal testimony or eyewitness testimony
  - B. Pharisees believe it is not a miracle, not a blind man, a fake healing  
(Fake healings do occur [Peter Popoff exposed by James Randi on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*])
  - C. You "say" he was born blind
  - D. Give God glory
    1. Could mean: God healed him, but not Jesus
    2. More likely: Tell the truth (Achan - Joshua 7:19)
  - E. Without cautious skepticism and discernment, truth wouldn't have a chance (there is a difference between honest doubt and unbelief)
  - F. Threatened to put them out of the synagogue- gr. aposunagogos (according to the Babylonian Talmud, for refusing to abide by the decision of the court)
- III. Unbelievers Can be Irrational (vv. 26-33)
- A. Pharisees irrational
    1. Didn't believe the miracle
    2. Didn't believe the man was born blind
    3. Thought it was a fake healing
    4. Trying to discredit the testimony
  - B. Blind man gives a clear, logical argument
    1. God doesn't hear sinners
    2. God heard Jesus
  - C. Syllogism - series of logical steps
    1. Only God can heal congenital blindness
    2. Jesus healed congenital blindness
    3. Jesus must be from God
  - D. Unbelievers are often guilty of the irrationality they accuse believers of
    1. Can't be a good God in an evil world
    2. So many religions, how can you be right?
    3. Doesn't matter what you believe if you are sincere
    4. Bible has a lot of mistakes, cannot be taken seriously
  - E. Christians should be prepared
    1. Outthink the world for Christ!- J.I. Packer
    2. Have a reasonable faith-William Lane Craig
    3. "Precisely because the Christians usually duck and run, the atheists have had it too easy. Their arguments have gone largely unanswered. They have been flogging the carcass of 'fundamentalism' without having to encounter the horsekick of a vigorous traditional Christianity...I am skeptical not only of the allegedly irrational claims of religion but also of the irrational claims made in the name of science and of skepticism itself." -Dinesh D'Souza *What's So Great About Christianity*
- IV. Unbelievers Can be Inflexible (vv. 34)
- A. The evidence doesn't matter
  - B. Rejecting Christ is not only a matter of the mind, but of the will
  - C. Unbelief of a searching heart - "I don't know, but I want to know."
  - D. Unbelief of a hardened heart - ask for more and more evidence but refuse to believe

How do we respond?

To the ceremonial: make it all about Jesus.

To the skeptic: be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. - 1 Peter 3:15

To the irrational: bone up on apologetics

To the inflexible: stay away from them. Don't cast your pearls before swine. -Matthew 7:6

You can have a satisfied mind and a peaceful heart. -Thomas Aquinas

**Publications referenced:** *What's So Great About Christianity* by Dinesh D'Souza; New Yorker Magazine;

**Figures referenced:** Voltaire; Arthur Clarke; Ted Turner; Napoleon Bonaparte; James Randi; Peter Popoff; J.I. Packer; William Lane Craig; Thomas Aquinas;

**Cross References:** Joshua 7:19; Matthew 7:6; Matthew 12:9-13; Matthew 23:24; Mark 1:21-28; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1-6; John 5:1-16; John 9: 1-7; 1 Peter 3:15;

**Greek Terms:** aposunagogos-put out of the synagogue