

John 9:1-41

¹As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." ¹²They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner

perform such signs?" And they were divided. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

³⁰The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the

world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." ³⁸He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" ⁴¹Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

John 9:1-41, 2017

Just like last week we have another story about someone coming to belief in Jesus, while others still question, wonder and miss the opportunity.

It is about a man who was born blind who encounters Jesus and has his sight restored.

You might want to say, well it would be easy for him to believe, after all he is the beneficiary of Jesus' healing power,

but if you read or listen to the story closely you will see belief was not instantaneous.

Jesus was not even around at the time. He had sent the man to wash his eyes.

In order to hear this story in a new way one thing we can do is understand this blindness is not a metaphor for spiritual blindness, some ethical shortcoming or anything else.

We can understand it as a place to be, a different world even if you think about what it means to be blind.

I would like all of you to close your eyes for just a little bit, and imagine you are blind.

You can't see. You are temporarily blind. Now listen.

The man's first interaction with Jesus is not by sight, but by hearing.

He hears the conversation between the disciples and Jesus.

Who sinned, the man or his parents, to cause his blindness?

Now, if you can hear that question asked about yourself, what does that feel like?

Jesus answers, Neither...he is God's instrument of revelation. God is revealed through him and his blindness.

Can you hear that about yourself? There is hope.

Jesus goes on, "We have to do God's work while it is still light, and I am the light of the world."

The world will soon be dark because Jesus wont be in it any longer.

Listen as Jesus prepares the mud.

The man probably heard Jesus mixing the mud. Probably didn't know what was going on, but heard it.

Feel Jesus' fingers on your eyes, applying the mud.

Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." You feel the cool water on your face, in your eyes.

Open your eyes.

You can see again!

The blind man can see. For the first time in his life he can see!

He goes home and the excitement ripples through the community.

Some believe it is him and others don't even believe it is the same person,

and yet others want to know how this happened, they want an explanation.

All the man can do is tell them the story.

The man called Jesus did it.

He doesn't even have Jesus there to support his story. He is gone.

This is only the beginning of the man's conversion to belief.

He is taken to the Pharisees to investigate, or interrogate, a couple of times, and all the man could do is tell the story, and he did over and over again.

Have you ever had one of those experiences in your life that was so transforming or meaningful you found yourself telling the story over and over again;

to your friends, your family,

to those who share a similar situation or experience?

Maybe even years later you tell the story, and you find the more you tell it the more the meaning of the story changes for you.

It isn't the facts of the story that change, it is how it allows you to see your past differently,

how you may interpret that event in the context of how it affected your future and brought you to where you were in the moment of telling the story some time later.

I have experienced that with my own story of call to the ministry,

in how my view of my life before then changed as I continued to write and rewrite the requisite autobiographies during my time in candidacy for the ministry.

I was able over a period of time to understand and interpret those stories in a new way,

in a way that revealed the hand of God at work in my life even when I thought there was no God who cared enough to be in my life.

This man is given sight, and the opportunities to tell his story over and over again,

so many times that by the time he was called before the Pharisees the second time he begins to teach them some theology.

The Pharisees command the man to give glory to God, and they call Jesus a sinner and the man replied,

I don't know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. I have already told you how he did it and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?...

Here is the astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

All the Pharisees could do is drive him out of the synagogue.

WOW! This guy has come a long way in a short period of time!

He has told his story repeatedly and as he has, he sees not only the world for the first time,

but he also sees the truth about Jesus more and more clearly all the time.

Additionally, the man has never given an adequate explanation about how this happened.

The story is not about explanations or proofs about how sight is restored or by who.

this blindness is not a metaphor for spiritual blindness, some ethical shortcoming.

In this story this blindness is a place to be, a different world if you think about what it means to be blind.

This miracle is really not about the restoration of physical sight, but about moving you to a new place, into a different world.

The miracle points beyond itself to what an encounter with Jesus signifies.

We who encounter Jesus and see cannot describe our conversion moment to anyone's satisfaction,

we cannot provide proofs of who or how,

but we can tell our story and what a difference it has made in our life,

“All I know is that I was blind and now I see.”

I can see the beauty of the world,

I can see the smiling faces of my family and friends,

I can see a new future,

I can see Jesus.

Amen