

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobnier, Illinois
Lent 4A
March 22, 2020
John 9:1-41

Lord, Open Our Eyes

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." (John 9:1-3 ESV)

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

As we are in the midst of a crisis due to a nasty virus, it's good to hear the Word of God. He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord." (Is. 55:8). Today's Gospel tells us of a blind man. He hadn't lost his sight. He'd been born that way. But why? The disciples ask the question that lies in our hearts too, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Surely someone's at fault. Surely someone sinned since this man and his parents are being punished so. Job's friends thought the same thing – that Job's problems were the result of some secret sin. And don't we ask in the midst of suffering, "What have I (or we) done to deserve this?" It's as though we think God is punishing us for something we've done.

But God's thoughts are not our thoughts. So Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him." This is the key. Everything that happens to us, even now, is for the glory of God for "we know that for those who love God all things work together for good." (Rom. 8:28).

The problem is that we are too often blind to God and His work in our lives. We miss much of the glory that God has revealed because we are turned in on ourselves. But He comes to us to open our eyes so that we may see Him and His work so that we too may believe in Him and worship Him.

So, how does God reveal His glory to the man born blind? With spit. And mud. And a washing. It all seemed so foolish. Yet, it was the power of God at work. Clinging to a promise implied, the man went and washed. And he "came back seeing." The one who had never seen anything before now saw it all. It must have been wonderful beyond words.

But what happens next shows how God further worked in this man. For when this man is asked what happened to him, he boldly proclaims the truth. He **was** born blind. He **was** the beggar the people had seen. But Jesus had anointed his eyes with mud and sent him to wash. And he received his sight. What a marvelous testimony. Short and sweet.

And while some undoubtedly marveled at what had happened, the Pharisees certainly did not. They were totally blind to the glory of God's work in this man. They were so blinded by their own way of thinking they didn't see that a new day had dawned. They didn't see that the Messiah had come, despite the signs which indicated that He had. They missed the glory of God which was being revealed in their very midst.

That's why they interrogated the man as they did. In their blindness, they refused to accept what the man told them. Yet, he was not intimidated. He told them over and over what had happened to him. And when the Pharisees accuse Jesus of being a sinner, the man confesses, "We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." The man born blind clearly saw the glory of God, but the Pharisees clearly did not, and they cast him out of the synagogue.

But that is not the end of the story. For Jesus sought this man and when He found him, He asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The man answered, "Who is He, sir, that I may believe in Him?" "And Jesus said to him, 'You have seen Him, and it is he who is speaking to you.'" To this the man exclaims, "Lord, I believe!" and worships Jesus. The works of God had been displayed in him – not only the gift of sight, but most especially the gift of faith.

The man who had known only a world of darkness had now seen the light, the Light of the world. He had received a miraculous washing which brought him from darkness to light not just physically, but, more importantly, spiritually. He had been brought to believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He had been brought to confess Jesus as a prophet, a man from God, and finally the Son of God. He had been brought from the darkness of unbelief to the light of faith.

Beloved, this is our story too. We too are born in the darkness of spiritual blindness. "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). We were all born in the darkness of sin. By nature we are unable to discern God's love and mercy. We grope around in the darkness believing that we have to earn His grace and favor by our obedience. If left to ourselves, we'd remain blind.

But God sought us out. He found us and has restored our sight by anointing us with the waters of Holy Baptism. He has washed us and made us clean as the mud of sin was washed away. St. Paul tells us that in Baptism we were buried with Christ, and that our old sinful nature was put to death with all its lusts and evil desires. No longer are our hearts set on gratifying the desires of the flesh. No longer are we enslaved to self-righteous attitudes and calloused hearts. For now a new man has arisen, just as Christ rose from the dead, to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Indeed, in Baptism we are given sight and blessed with cross-eyes. By faith we see the cross upon which our Savior died. We, who were completely born in sin, have been born anew by God's grace through faith on account of Christ. Like the blind man, we may not know everything, but one thing we do know, "I was blind, but now I see." We too, by God's grace confess, "Lord, I believe!"

And having been given such a wonderful gift, how can we not tell others? When we face trials of all kinds, especially when it's for being a Christian, we listen to God's Word, "In your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." (1 Pet. 3:15). Yes, we suffer, but not without hope.

Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." Praise God that He has opened our eyes so that we see our sin in the mirror of His perfect Law. More than that, He sent His only-begotten Son, the Light of the world, into this world of darkness and blindness, to bring life, light, and sight. And Jesus did just that as He was born and lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father. Our blindness led Jesus to the cross. And it was in the darkness of Good Friday that Jesus paid the price for all. But the sun's dawn on Easter sees the shining angels announce that Jesus is alive and victorious over the darkness. Light and life are His – and ours. The risen Christ cures spiritual blindness through His anointing and His words and brings us sight and light. And healed thus of our blindness, we worship Him.

Indeed, God's thoughts are not our thoughts and that's a good thing. For by His grace in Christ, "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). Indeed, you were blind, but now you see. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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