

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Lent 4A
March 19, 2023
John 9:1-41

From Blindness to Sight and Confession

As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. . . .
5 [Jesus said,] "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. . . . 35 Jesus . . . having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." 38 He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. (John 9:1, 5-7, 35-38 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

Imagine being born blind. You've never seen the beauty of God's creation. You've never seen a sunrise or a sunset. You've never seen the beauty of the beach or the mountains. You've never seen a field of flowers. You've never seen your parent's or loved one's face or anyone else's. So much you take for granted would be totally unknown – you couldn't drive or watch tv or do almost anything else you enjoy. Furthermore, you would be at the mercy of others. What would that be like?

Yet, you're really no different from the blind man in today's Gospel. O yes, your eyes probably work well enough. But you were born blind still the same. From your beginning, you were spiritually blind. You couldn't see Jesus as your Savior any more than this blind man – until Jesus opened his eyes and revealed Himself as the Son of Man and he believed it. By faith alone you see Jesus your Savior.

You see, you were born spiritually blind for the same reason this man was—you were born in sin. That's what you were by nature.

David confesses in Psalm 51, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51:5). You must confess that too. Born a sinner, you were estranged from God your heavenly Father from the start. You could not see the Light of the world. You needed a miracle to be able to see Jesus as your Savior. You could not by your own reason or strength believe in Jesus as your Lord, and, if left to yourself, you wouldn't want to.

But the Holy Spirit called you by the Gospel to faith when you were baptized. He said, "Jesus, your Lord and Savior, died on the cross for you!" and got your attention. He said, "Look to the cross where Christ took your place and your punishment, all so you could have His place in heaven and the eternal rewards He earned." Then, the eyes of your faith opened to see Jesus for the first time as both your Lord and your Savior!

Like this blind man, you have your rough patches in life too. You may not have lost eyesight, but you've had physical ailments, financial problems, relationship difficulties, and other challenges to your faith. You might be tempted to think, "What have I done to deserve this?" "I must have offended God, and now He's punishing me." You might wonder, "I've not done enough good works that God expects of me, and He's mad." I'm just getting what I deserve.

But, beloved, your heavenly Father isn't mad at you or punishing you. For like that blind man you're washed – in your baptism. You are now holy and righteous in God's sight, because you are cleansed of all your sins. Jesus has taken all your sins upon Himself and become sin for you taking your place on the cross. God has made you His Own baptized child, and, through the eyes of faith, you see yourself as God does.

People who use their own notions about Jesus do not see a true picture of Him. The Pharisees used their own not-so-enlightened thinking and concluded that Jesus was a sinner. After all, He violated the Sabbath day. The blind man figured Jesus was just a prophet and nothing more.

But when the man is hauled in to the Pharisees, he didn't yet know who Jesus was. When questioned, he simply told them what

had happened, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” Of course, they didn’t like that answer because they were blind to the truth, even when it (or He) stood in front of them. They continued to badger the man, but he would not budge. He may not have known much about Jesus, but he did know that Jesus had healed him. Still, the light was beginning to dawn, for he said, “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.” In their blind rage, the Pharisees threw the man out of the synagogue.

But that was not the end for this man. He needed to be further enlightened, so Jesus finds him and asks, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man replies, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus answers, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” And the man declares, “Lord, I believe.” The man’s eyes were now truly opened. He had been brought to faith so that he clearly saw that Jesus was from God and had come to restore creation and humanity. Jesus came so that the blind would see, really see.

Notice that Jesus sought the man and not the other way around. For, in truth, no one seeks Jesus. So, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, seeks out lost sheep, just like He did for this formerly blind man. You don't have to come to Him. He finds you. He comes to you with His body given and with His blood shed for you for your forgiveness. He feeds you with Himself in the Lord's Supper, as He leads lost sheep to the green pasture of the feast of the Lord's Table.

By God’s grace in Christ, your blindness is gone. No, not by mud in your eye like the blind man. But, by a miracle nonetheless. For by the work of the Holy Spirit, you see Jesus for who He is: one greater than a prophet; the Christ, come from God. Through your baptism into Christ, you are washed clean and made whole, saving both your soul and your body.

Yes, Jesus, the Light of the world, has come to bring light into this sin-darkened world. He does that by taking the sin of the world upon Himself. All the hatred and hostility of men who shake their fist at God—those who think they can see but are really blind—all that is

directed to Jesus. In their rage, they nail Him to a cross, and, more than that, He suffers all of God’s wrath against sinners, in our place.

My dear friends, in Jesus Your blindness is gone. No, not by mud in your eye like the blind man. But, by a miracle nonetheless. Calling you to faith by the Gospel, the Holy Spirit has given you the eyes of faith, to recognize Jesus in His gracious works in Word and sacrament. By faith, you see yourself washed clean by the waters and the Word of your baptism. You are one who worships Jesus, hearing His Word, receiving His absolution, and eating His body and drinking His blood for your forgiveness, life, and salvation. God grant that you live in that light, now and forever. Amen.

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

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener