

When Jesus, the light of the world, shines the works of God into the darkness of our broken lives, some people will try honestly to make sense of what really happened, but others who are self-assured, prejudiced, and hostile will become blind to God’s revealing works done by Jesus. Which one are you?

Introduction – A few weeks ago this church sang the hymn Amazing Grace.

I. What Really Happened?

A. Jesus gave sight to a man born blind (vv. 6-7)

1. Without attaching any superstitious power to his saliva, Jesus spits to make clay from the dirt to anoint the blind man’s eyes. Apparently Jesus tailored his method of healing to the needs of the individual. In the case of the man born blind, Jesus engaged the man’s remaining senses and provided an opportunity through physical touch to experience a vivid sense of involvement in this healing. Requiring the man to obey to activate the healing encouraged the man to show his faith.

2. As his disciples and the blind man listen, Jesus employs a play on words: Siloam means “Sent”. Jesus is the “Sent One” who now sends the blind man to the pool of “Sent”. As the only source of spring water in the city, it had religious and ceremonial value because it was where the sacred water-drawing ceremony occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus sent the blind man to the “living water” pool on the climactic day of the great feast so he would experience Jesus as the true “living water” in the most profound way (Jn 7:37-39). What happened next is recorded very matter-of-fact. “He went and washed and came back seeing.”

B. Those who knew the man tried to confirm Jesus healed him (vv. 8-13)

Onlookers and neighbors had a hard time wrapping their heads around what happened. A man with fully functioning eyesight standing before them looked just like the same man they only knew as a poor beggar blind from birth. This man didn’t look *exactly* the same as the blind man.

II. What Does It Mean?

A. The man born blind is a picture of *every one of us* (vv. 1-3a)

1. Don’t let yourself get distracted by wondering what kind of sinner was the man born blind. Jesus is not denying the doctrine of original sin (Rom 5:12-21). Moreover, Jesus is not denying that certain trials in our lives are not God-ordained punishments for specific sin. Furthermore, Jesus knows the Scriptures in which the LORD promises to visit the iniquity of the fathers on their children to multiple generations (Ex 20:5-6; 34:6-7). Jesus doesn’t blame anyone because he wants us to learn something different. One reason God allows suffering is to bring us into closer union with Christ and his cross. God is usually not too concerned to give you details on why you suffer. Instead, he wants you to ask him for grace and strength to endure the trial, and for clearer perspective on what is happening.

2. Debilitating natural blindness. His unusual suffering cannot be traced to his parents sinning or to his prenatal sin. The man was born blind so it would be obvious to all that he could not be saved apart from the works of God displayed in him. This miracle in the physical world is a symbol of deeper spiritual meaning. We are all born totally helpless in spiritual darkness, and Jesus is the only one who can open our eyes. This man’s healing is a picture of what being saved by Jesus Christ looks like. Do you see it?

B. Shining God's light in the darkness is *doing God's work* (vv. 3b-5)

A paradox. Jesus works during the light of day before the night of his crucifixion comes, but that work is in the midst of those shrouded in darkness. He enters the darkness to shine light for us. Notice Jesus alternates between "I" and "we" when teaching who does the work. Jesus is the light of the world, and his disciples shine his light also (Mt 5:14-16).

C. As the sixth sign worked by Jesus, this healing points us to his *origin from God* (vv. 14, 16)

Competing syllogisms. Some of the Pharisees and the man born blind formulate contradictory arguments. All trying to answer questions such as, "Is Jesus a Sabbath-breaker?" "Is Jesus a sinner?" "Can a sinner work such signs?" The point of debate is where Jesus is from. All agree supernatural healings only work by God's power. And all agree that God does not work his power through sinners, because God doesn't listen to sinners—you have to confess and repent of your sins, and turn by faith to God for him to listen to you. What the Pharisees refuse to see is that Jesus does not break the Sabbath command as it is recorded in the Bible; he just delights in flaunting their man-made rules and regulations that grow out of their interpretation and application of Sabbath law. Jesus works such miraculous signs because he is the sinless one from God: the Light of the world.

III. How Should You Respond?

A. Honestly by faith (vv. 11, 15, 17; cf. v. 22)

The man born blind never changes or embellishes his testimony. He always confesses the most he can say about Jesus, and he continues to seek more information about Jesus. The man follows the evidence about Jesus wherever it leads, and wherever God leads him. Contrast his honesty with the dishonesty of many Pharisees. They did not seek the truth about what really happened so much as they tried to evade the truth and punish Jesus' disciples for challenging their authority to oversee Sabbath day regulations. What they really want is to keep people away from Jesus.

B. Humbly by faith (v. 12; cf. vv. 16, 18-19)

The man doesn't pretend to have all the answers about Jesus. He's used to relying on others to inform him what to believe. Contrast his attitude with the hostile, self-assured position of many Pharisees. They know the answers about Jesus before asking, and they believe they are righteous and he is a sinner. When the Pharisees call the man's parents to vouch that he is their son and was indeed born blind, their prideful line of questioning places the parents in a dangerous position.

C. Courageously by faith (vv. 9, 11, 17; cf. vv. 18-23)

Even though he can now see, this man is still quite vulnerable. But he had courage, informed and empowered by his strengthening belief that God will continue to care for him, whatever anyone else might do to harm him. Contrast his bravery with the cowardice of his parents. Everyone knew the Pharisees had agreed on a policy that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be "put out" (excommunicated) from the synagogue. Because they lived in fear of the Jewish leaders, few people felt the freedom to speak well of Jesus, especially when the leaders were listening.

Conclusion – After all this, what do you see? A genuine miracle worked by Jesus, with all the intended meaning packed into it? The Son of Man sent from God in heaven to work the works of God? A pitiful man blind from birth who receives not only healed eyes but spiritual sight from the light of the world? A man who is portrayed as a mirror in which you might see your own desperately needy spiritual condition? Or is it just a fantastic story to you? An unclear story that you can't see (or won't see) its meaning and significance for you? If that's you, then keep asking questions honestly, humbly, and courageously, asking God to open your eyes to see the light.