

John 9:1-41

“Eyes Opened”

Fourth Sunday in Lent (A)

March 19, 2023

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

What goes around, comes around. Actions have consequences. As you sow, you shall also reap. The law of cause and effect.

Actions do have consequences. That is true. But what if there was no logical action that led to a consequence? Often, we have questions, but they may not always have a logical answer.

And so it was one day as Jesus was walking along, and there at the street corner was a man born blind. The disciples asked Jesus, **“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”** (John 9:2)

Maybe the account of Jacob and Esau struggling together within their mother’s womb came to mind in thinking that this man’s sin caused this (Genesis 25:22). Or could it be that this man’s parents, or even grandparents caused this, since the Lord visits iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Him (Exodus 20:5).

What was the cause? The disciples wanted to satisfy their curiosity. This is a question that many of us ask as we attempt to make sense of our world. Whose fault is it? Why did this have to happen?

A man is suffering lung cancer. Well, there has to be a cause! He must have smoked. But what if he never smoked?

Another person has kidney disease. It must have been caused by alcohol. But what if he never drank?

Heart attack, breast cancer. What if the person just died suddenly? We naturally desire to know why. What caused it? There must be a reason.

We all have so many questions. Sometimes we have answers, but every so often, we don’t.

So, why was this man born blind? Was it because of his sin? Was it because of something he did or was going to do? Or perhaps, it wasn't his fault, as he was receiving bad karma from his parents.

Why? Why do bad things happen? Well, the easy answer is sin. We do live in a fallen world. Now, for this particular man, Jesus says that there was no specific sin that caused him to be born blind. Yet, sin was the culprit. And certain sins have specific consequences. And ultimately death is going to get each and every one of us no matter how well we live, and no matter how righteous we think we may be. Due to Adam's fall into sin, all creation suffers. Because of sin, the world is broken.

Sin is ultimately behind the cause of blindness since human beings were created to see. But since the Fall, the world has been out of whack. The world is disordered. However, for the man born blind, no particular sin caused his handicap.

So, Jesus spat on the ground and made mud with His saliva. There, He forms new eyes from the dust of the ground as He anoints this man's eyes with the mud and says to him, ***“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing***” (John 9:7).

He did as Jesus said. He walked to the pool of Siloam with mud caked over his eyes and there, he washed and for the first time he sees! He sees color! He sees the faces of his friends who led him to the pool of Siloam. He sees all the buildings around him. And he returns to where he used to sit and beg. He looks around and is now able to see.

But this healing is soon met with criticism. “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” “No, but he only looks like him.” How could this be? How could some of his closest neighbors not recognize him?

Have you been out shopping and someone comes up to you, and even calls you by name, but you have no clue who you are talking to. He may look familiar, but you just can't place where. Eventually, something jogs your memory. Ahh, you're my neighbor down the street!

All the while, the healed man says, “I am the man!” “Well, how do you now see?” “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So, I did, and now I see.”

Now, this caused much commotion. Some said this supposed man born blind was a fraud, others said this was a true miracle! Soon, the Pharisees heard about it and how Jesus was involved. If they could have any way to discredit Jesus, they were going to take it.

So, the Pharisees called in this man to ask him how he had received his sight. The man said, ***“He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”*** Mud, eh. For according to the rabbinic rules concerning the Sabbath, this was forbidden. ***“This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath”*** (John 9:16).

So, ***“What do you say about him, since he opened your eyes?” “He is a prophet”*** (John 9:17).

Throughout all of this, this man never weakens in his witness. *“He put mud on my eyes and I washed and now I see!”* But now he is beginning to realize that this Jesus may be more than just a man.

After his testimony, they called in the man’s parents. Now, back in that day, the most severe penalty for any Jew was to be excommunicated from the synagogue. This was the most severe penalty short of death, because being cut off from the religious fellowship meant that they were no longer blessed and were without any hope.

So, this man’s parents were being extra cautious. They didn’t want to get caught saying anything that could affirm this healing for they knew that anyone who had nice things to say about Jesus would be put out of the synagogue. So, they simply say, *“Yes, he is our son, and he was born blind but if you want any more information, just ask him!”*

This only further enraged the Pharisees, so they brought back in the man. The Pharisees say to him, *“Just tell us the truth. What really happened?”* The thing is, he already told them: *“He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”* But they would not listen. And they would not see. They just thought this healing would be impossible. So, they cast him out of the synagogue.

All the while, throughout this interrogation, this man’s faith was growing, which is usually the case under religious persecution. First, he thought Jesus was just a man. Then he came to the realization that this Jesus must be a prophet.

Is that it, is Jesus just a prophet? I'm sure that when he woke up that morning, he never expected any of these events to happen. Surely, he thought he would be without sight forever. But without any merit of his own, he now has sight. And even with sight, he still doesn't fully know who this Jesus is who cured him.

But the interrogation wasn't quite over. Jesus comes up to him – *and despite now having sight* – he does not recognize Jesus. He likely thought this was just some man who heard about all the commotion. But Jesus began to speak – and he recognized his voice – and his faith was strengthened even more.

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, ‘And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.’ He said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him” (John 9:35-38).

His eyes are now fully opened. He not only had vision, but he also had faith in Jesus who gave him his sight. Even with the gift of sight, this second miracle gave him the ability to truly see what is invisible to the natural eye – the Messiah in His grace for sinners. In faith, he worshipped Him.

Today, we hear how Jesus gave physical and spiritual sight – *faith* – to a man born blind. His eyes were opened twice – first physically and then spiritually. He could not only see Jesus, but He also knew Him as his Lord.

Remember, Jesus sent this man to the pool of Siloam. He entered the water blind, but he came out seeing.

The man born blind never requested a healing. But out of pure love for him, Jesus healed him so that the works of God might be displayed in him. In pure love for us, Jesus opens our spiritually blind eyes through the washing of water and His Word, so that we can see Him. We can see Him as our Savior.

It was never God's plan that man fall into sin. It was never God's intention that there would be illness and death, or that men would be born blind.

And yet, in the mystery of His grace, in the Lamb that was slain, our Lord took a fallen creation and not only restored it, but made it better than it ever was. By the mystery of the incarnation and the glory of the cross, we have come to see God as we never could before: face-to-face, in full and sacrificial love.

The world is blind to what we see. The world is profoundly unhappy. It's lonely, sad, scared, and angry. We may have some of those feelings, too. But when we look to Jesus, we have the peace that is beyond all human understanding. We have peace, because we know that whatever bothers us now is only temporary, since Jesus died for every sin, so that our sins don't keep us away from God anymore.

Here, in the Divine Service, God restores us through His Word and Sacrament. He opens our eyes to joy. So, we rejoice in our sufferings. Instead of trying to make sense of this world, by asking what caused this or that to happen, we just ask, how will this glorify God? In Christ alone, He opens our eyes. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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