

The 4th Sunday in Lent

Text: John 9:1–7, 13–17, 34–39 (ESV)

¹As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed 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.” ⁶Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

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. ¹⁵So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

³⁴They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” ³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”

Theme: How the Blind Man Came to See Jesus as His Savior

In the last three weeks, we have looked at three intriguing people from John’s Gospel who came to see Jesus as their Savior. Those three people were Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, and today the blind man. At first none of them knew what to make of Jesus. Then they came to see Him as a prophet, but in the end, they each saw Him as their Savior. Today I would like to look at how the blind man came to see Jesus as his Savior.

I. He came to see Jesus, despite three things.

Despite the harsh words of the disciples. The story begins with Jesus and His disciples walking past a blind man who was begging along side the road. Jesus noticed the man. It seems that they stopped right in front of the man and that the disciples knew something about this man. They asked him, “*Who sinned this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*” It was a brutal question. How could the disciples be so heartless? It reminds me of a time when I was about 8 years old. I made a comment about the physical appearance of a man at my dad’s gas station. My mother grabbed my hand, dragged me in the car, and told me in terms that I have never forgotten to this day, that you don’t talk about other people that way.

The disciples were harsh and cruel. They made the mistake that many people make when tragedy strikes someone else. They tried to answer the question, “Why?” This was the problem with Job’s friends in the Old Testament. Every day they tried to figure out why Job had so much tragedy in his

life, and the conclusion that they came up with was that Job must have done something very wrong. Job answered them, *“How long will you torment me and crush me with words?”* (19:1)

One of the cardinal sins for us to commit when someone experiences tragedy is to try to figure out why. When we think that we have the answer for why tragedy strikes someone, we will almost always be wrong. The disciples were wrong, and Job’s friends were wrong. The Bible is clear when it says, *“Who has known the mind of God?”*

When you go through a time of tragedy and someone says words, that seem cruel and unkind, forgive them. Job pleaded with His friends to have pity. Jesus prayed, *“Father forgive them for they know not what they do,”* as He hung on the cross. There are those times when someone wants to help, but they make you feel worse. At such times it is best to commit our cause to the Lord and are patient and forgiving toward those who have said words that hurt.

He came to see Jesus, despite not understanding what Jesus was doing. Jesus then spit on the ground and made mud with His saliva. Then He told the man to wash the mud off in the pool of Siloam. Notice that this man never asked for a miracle. He might not have even known who Jesus was. Then Jesus spits on the ground and puts the mud on his eyes. To be honest, I would have been mad! It was humiliating enough to beg at the side of the road. Now this man comes and puts His spit all over your face. Here is how he described what happened to the pharisees, *“He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see.”* It was a total surprise to him that he could see after he washed his eyes.

Don’t we also have those times in our lives when we pray and pray, and it seems as though God isn’t answering our prayers. Instead more tragedy seems to be around almost every corner. Job also cried out, *“Though I cry, I’ve been wronged, I get no response.”* (Job 19:7) Sometimes God’s timing and His ways are very different from what we want. He seems to be far away. Then suddenly, His help comes at a time and in a way that we never expected.

This is a common theme in Paul Gerhardt’s hymns. He writes of this in his hymn, “Commit Whatever Grieves Thee,”

9. A while His consolation He may to thee deny,
And seem as though in trial He far from thee would fly;
A while distress and anguish may compass Thee around,
Nor to thy supplication An answering voice be found.

10. But if thou perseverest, Thou shalt deliverance find.
Behold, all unexpected He will thy soul unbind
And from the heavy burden Thy heart will soon set free;
And thou wilt see the blessing He had in mind for thee.

Even in those times when we don’t understand what God is doing. He is working all things for the good of those who love Him.

He came to see Jesus despite persecution. After he had been healed, his neighbors asked him how it happened., He told them that a man named Jesus put mud on his eyes. He washed it off and he could see. Notice that he simply called Jesus a **“man.”** Then they brought him to the pharisees. They also asked how he received his sight. He repeated the story. They debated about how a “sinner”

could heal. Then they asked the man what he thought about Jesus. His answer was, “*He is a prophet.*” Notice the progression. Then the pharisees brought in the man’s parents who confirmed that he had been born blind. Then they turned to the man and said, “*Give glory to God. We know that this man [Jesus] is a sinner.*” He answered them, “*If this man were not **from God**, He could to nothing.*” Then they cast him out of the synagogue. Jesus found him and revealed that He is the Savior. Then the man said, “*Lord, I believe,*” and he worshiped Jesus. That is where this man really received his sight. He didn’t know who was standing in front of him at first. Now with the eyes of faith, he came to see Jesus as his Savior.

It often happens to us that in times of persecution, we come to see how precious our faith in Jesus is. We know Him as the one who has forgiven all of our sins, who is with us in every need, and will receive us into His glory in heaven. We just sang about such persecution,

12. From me this is not hidden, Yet, I am not afraid;
I leave my cares, as bidden, To whom my vows were paid.
Though life and limb it cost me and everything I own,
Unshaken shall I trust Thee And cleave to Thee alone.
(“If God Himself Be for Me”)

IV. From this story we learn that the Lord uses trial to display His work in our lives.

That was the answer that Jesus gave to the disciples’ question. This man was born blind so that God’s work would be displayed in his life. We would like God to strengthen our faith with great blessings. Money should fall from heaven. We should remain healthy and wealthy and free of every temptation. But it’s interesting that people who seem to have everything often fall away from our Lord. They don’t see any need for Him. But when crosses come or when we have lost a battle against temptation, we see just how much we need Jesus, and we realize just how good and gracious He has been to us. It is often these times when we have had crosses to bear, which strengthen our faith the most. They display God’s work in our lives for us and many others to see.

How did this man come to see Jesus as His Savior? It was by grace alone. Christ searched for Him as he begged at the side of the road. He found him after he had been cast out of the synagogue. Jesus did allow this man to bear his crosses, but he came to see that Jesus was with him and delivered him. When you have you crosses to bear, know that our Lord is with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. In just the right moment, He delivers His people from all evil, that we may see even clearer that He is our Savior.

Amen.

***Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
March 30, 2014***