

***“God’s Works on Display”***

July 13, 2014

Text: John 9:1-7

**I want to begin w/ an exercise in simulated blindness.**

We’re going to place a series of 5 photographs on the screen, but

I want you to close your eyes after the 4<sup>th</sup> photo, to get a little sense of what you’d be missing and how you would feel if you were actually blind.

**[Show *Beautiful flower, Beautiful birds, Fish striped, & Tulips*]**

Now please close your eyes.

**[Show *Beautiful butterfly* and leave it on screen]**

Now open your eyes to see what you missed while your eyes were closed.

You experienced just momentarily & to a tiny degree the frustration a blind person must cope w/ all his life.

He hears other people talking about things they can see, but which he will never see.

Eventually, he must simply resign him to such frustration, telling himself it’s just not in the cards for him to ever experience the joy of seeing things that everyone else can see.

**If you had gone blind at some point late in life, you couldn’t have seen any of those beautiful creatures.**

But you might have imagined what they look like, if someone described them to you, trying to remember

the shapes of birds/fish, & what the colors red/yellow look like.

But if you had been born blind, you'd have no frame of reference at all, from which to even imagine them.

**In today's text Jesus will heal a man who was born blind, as a display of the divine power our Savior Himself wielded.**

Later on, in John 9:32, the healed blind-man will say=>

*“Since the beginning of time it has **never** been heard that anyone **opened the eyes** of a person born **blind**.”*

That was absolutely true—there is no record in the OT of anyone ever having been healed of blindness at all.

It was a miracle that God reserved for the coming Messiah alone.

But Isaiah had written in several verses of his prophecy, that Messiah would both heal the blind, and give them true light, when He finally appeared on earth.

E.g. in Isa 42, God the Father says to God the Son=>

*“I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand & watch over You, & I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, / To open blind eyes” (42:6-7).*

Jesus came to earth & continually provided evidence that He was indeed the Messiah, by healing blind people.

When John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He really was the Messiah, X said=> *“Go and report to*

*John what you hear and see: / the **blind receive sight** and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Mt 11:4-5).*

Proof #1 of X’s Messiahship was His healing the blind.

**But Jesus’ healing the blind man was also a display of God the Father’s power/love/goodness, because when Jesus heals, He’s doing the works of God.**

Jesus will tell His disciples in our text=> *“We must work the works of Him who sent Me” (9:4).*

In healing the blind man, Jesus was doing the work of God.

If you have invited Jesus X into your heart, you have all the power of God Himself, doing His work w/i you.

He’s the One who (according to Eph 3:20)=> *“...is able to do far more abundantly **beyond** all that we ask or think, according to the **power** that works within us.”*

**But we also learn from the example of the blind man in today’s text, that God may delay or even withhold His healing power, so that a believer might glorify Him through his/her affliction.**

\* E.g. Fanny Crosby lost her sight when she was just 6 weeks old, but went on to write over 8000 beloved hymns, including *Blessed Assurance*, & *To God Be the Glory*.

\* I think too of our dear young friend, Becky Franklin, who, in spite of being very/very ill w/ a failing liver, has amazed us by praising God in the midst of it all.

**Today's text uses the account of Jesus' healing the blind man as evidence that He is the Messiah—who cares, who instructs, who works, & who heals, just as OT Scripture had prophesied Messiah would...**

### **1) Jesus Cares**

OT Scripture had taught the Jews that, when Messiah came, He would be very caring/compassionate.

The prophet Micah had written=> *“He will again have compassion on us”* (Mic 7:19).

**[John 9:1]=> “As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.”**

**Jesus & His disciples were moving along past the place where this blind man sat, when X stopped/took notice of him.**

They must all have seen him before, because we see in the next verse, the disciples even knew he'd been blind from birth.

They didn't live there in Jerusalem, being Galileans.

But they must have seen/heard-about him often, while visiting Jerusalem for the various feasts.

Unlike the disciples, Jesus took special notice of this man.

As we'll see, God sovereignly intended for Jesus to heal him as a display of God's own works on earth.

Somehow God the Father must have signaled His Son that this was His purpose for the man's blindness from the very beginning.

But simply on a personal level, Jesus responded to the man out of His own personal care/compassion.

The disciples would theorize about why he was blind=>

\* Was God punishing him for a sin he had committed?

\* Or was He punishing him for 1 of his parent's sins?

Jesus had no time for such idle speculation, faced with the tragedy of this man's lifelong blindness.

He simply acted to relieve the man's miserable plight.

**If some of us here need X's care/help today, be encouraged in the knowledge that He cares, and that His care/concern is available to you in abundance, as it was that blind man.**

Even if you're in a crisis of your own making (as the disciples were insinuating this man might be) Jesus will welcome you w/o questions & w/o reproach.

As James wrote, He "*gives to all generously and without reproach*" (Jms 1:5).

Jesus welcomes sinners out of His love/care for their souls, just as the prodigal son's father welcomed him.

No questions such as=> Where have you been, & what have you done w/ all those things I've given you?

The father just hugged his son, kissed him, welcomed him home, & treated him like a prince.

Jesus cares so much about the needy who come to Him in humble faith, that He deals w/ them as that father did his own son.

**The blind man in our text didn't even know Jesus was there; he couldn't see Him.**

He certainly didn't call out to Him, asking to be healed.

Jesus Himself initiated the whole interaction out of His own compassion, & His obedience to His Father's will.

And when a sinner comes to Him in repentant faith, seeking Jesus' forgiveness of his sin, it's because the Spirit of the Lord is already at work in the person's heart, calling him to Jesus.

Why is that the case?

Because God cares about sinners.

Every one of us has needed that from Him, because we were all born just as blind spiritually, as this man had been blind physically.

Jesus is the only One who can heal such blindness.

As the great physician, He is an expert at it.

And He loves to do it, because He cares so deeply.

**Seeing the sightless eyes of that man, X said, "I must work."**

He unfolded His loving heart & imagined what it must be like for him to have been imprisoned in total darkness for so many years.

He thought too of the man's soul, imprisoned in spiritual darkness/ignorance.

And as He thought about it, His own heart ached, for the man.

As Xns, I hope that we too can learn to let our hearts ache for those who suffer physical affliction, or spiritual ignorance. I hope we can envision the man of Macedonia calling to us, "*Come over and help us*" (Acts 16:9).

Knowing that they may soon be in Hell if we don't care enough to do God's works on their behalf, I hope we say as Jesus did, "I must work."

## **2) Jesus Instructs**

The OT taught Jewish people to expect Messiah to be a teacher and a revealer of God's truth.

He would be the great Prophet like Moses, promised in Deut 18.

In Isa 61:1, the Messiah says prophetically=> "*The Lord has anointed Me to bring good news.*"

Jesus actually quoted that verse as He taught in Nazareth's synagogue, applying it to Himself.

[Verse 2]=> "*And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?'*"

### **Where would the disciples come up with such strange ideas?**

It's very clear that they believed the man's blindness was a divine punishment for some sin.

Either his own sin, or his parents' sin.

He had been born blind—a common plight caused when infants pass through the birth canal of mothers infected w/ STD's. Today medication is immediately placed in newborns' eyes to prevent such blindness at birth.

But if this man was born blind as a punishment for his sin, logic demanded that he must have committed that sin as a fetus in the womb.

This notion is absurd, but rabbinic theology allowed for it.

*Genesis Rabbah* (a rabbinic commentary on Genesis) cites

Gen 25:22 to prove that Esau had sinned in the womb when he struggled w/ his twin brother Jacob.

On the other hand, the alternative—that the man's blindness was due to his parents' sin—is equally unreasonable/unjust.

We know God justice opposes one person's punishment being involuntarily inflicted upon someone else.

Deut 24:16 (God)=> *“Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.”*

**Someone: What about Exod 20:5?=> “I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.”**

This pertains to whole societies that are so wicked, their influence corrupts succeeding generations.

It's not a statement about parents/children as individuals, but rather whole generations of people.

E.g. the children of Jericho died when Israel invaded that city because their parents' immoral influence had so defiled/corrupted their culture, it was inevitable that the children too would grow up to become utterly corrupt.

The same was true in Sodom/Gomorrah.

Some children do suffer natural consequences from parental sins.

E.g. birth defects caused by a parents' drug-use.

But this isn't because the child is morally culpable for his parents' sins—he is simply the victim of their sinful/selfish irresponsibility.

It's also true that there are instances in the Bible of individuals being punished by God because of specific sins of their own.

Such instances are the exception, but they have occurred and still do occur.

\* In the OT, God inflicted leprosy upon Miriam because she had challenged her brother Moses' authority.

\* In the NT, I Cor 11:30 says of those who take communion in an unworthy manner=> *“For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.”*

But there is no way for us to establish a cause/effect linkage between specific sins and specific cases of suffering.

In Luke 13, Jesus asked His followers=> *“Do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? / I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”* (Lk 13:4-5).

Those 18 people had not died because of specific sins they had committed.

**Like the disciples in our text, people cling to the notion that suffering is the direct consequence of sin—esp. when someone else is the sinner/sufferer.**

E.g. self-righteous Eliphaz relished the opportunity to insinuate that Job’s suffering was actually God’s judging him for his sins, sarcastically asking Job (Job 22:4-5)=> *“Is it because of your reverence*

*that He reproves you, That He enters into judgment against you? / Is not your wickedness great, & your iniquities without end?”*

God later rebuked Eliphaz for his cruel/presumptuous remarks.

The people of Melita saw a snake fasten itself on Paul’s hand, after his escape from a shipwreck at sea.

Their immediate conclusion was=> *“Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live”* (Acts 28:4).

**The disciples in our own text had concluded that the blind man’s blindness was punishment for somebody’s sin.**

In so doing, they just added insult to his injury (literally).  
Jesus stopped and used the situation to instruct them in the truth,  
correcting their mistaken thinking.

[Verse 3]=> *“Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”*

**Man is prone to think simplistically, but God’s ways are not simplistic.**

He allows people to suffer for a whole variety of reasons we might not expect, all of which are good/right=>

\* E.g. for believers, suffering can represent God’s chastening us for our good.

So James 1 actually says=> *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, / knowing that the testing of your faith produces **endurance**”* (1:2-3).

Heb 12 says=> *“Those whom the Lord **loves** He disciplines”* (12:6).

\* Exod 14:18 (God)=> *“Then the Egyptians will know that **I am the LORD**, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.”*

How had God honored Himself through Pharaoh and his army? By destroying them.

It would have devastated the nation of Egypt, but if it had taught them to humble themselves before the true God, the knowledge that He is Lord (as He had said) would have become a wonderful blessing for them.

**In the case of the blind man in our text, God had purposed from the beginning that his blindness should serve as a backdrop against which the works of God could be displayed, through His Son—Jesus X.**

This then was Jesus' momentary instruction of His disciples—opening up their minds to a far broader understanding of God's ways/purposes than they had even considered.

Not only did He teach them there isn't always a direct connection between specific sins and suffering here on earth;

He also taught them that God's purposes/power are far greater & more multi-faceted and wonderful than they had ever imagined.

### **3) Jesus Works**

This too was expected of Messiah—that He would act of God's behalf, as God's proxy, doing the works of God, for God.

In Isa 61:1, Messiah says prophetically=> *“He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted [that would be doing the work of God], to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners.*

These would all be works of God that Messiah would do.

**[Verse 4] (Jesus)**=> *“We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.”*

**Jesus spent His whole life doing the works God had sent Him to do on earth, just as the OT had prophesied Messiah would.**

In His view, the blind man presented another opportunity to do so.

Jesus always used the word “*must*” when talking about the mission God the Father had sent Him to fulfill.

He was under a happy sense of divine obligation.

But Jesus said, “*We must work,*” because He wanted to teach His disciples to adopt His own spiritual work ethic.

He wanted them to understand, it’s imperative that all believers devote their lives to doing God’s work.

They would have preferred to spend their lives in theoretical/theological speculation=> “Who sinned, that this man should be born blind?”

Jesus was saying, in essence, “No! Stop speculating and get busy doing the works of God, instead!”

Deeds of kindness, grace, compassion, ministry, instruction, and evangelism.

**This principle holds true for us as well.**

There’s an urgency about our doing the works of God.

That’s because we have only a limited amount of time to serve our Lord in this world, reversing the effects of sin on it, and redeeming the lost from its grip.

This is what Paul referred to as, “*making the most of your*

*time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16).*

**X added to that urgency, by saying=> “As long as it is day.”**

By that, He meant, as long as He, the light of the world, was still in the world, revealing God’s truth, & doing God’s miracles.

**[Vs 5] (Jesus)—“While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.”**

**Jesus was here to redeem the world & atone for sin, bringing God’s light to the world in a special sense.**

Jesus was the Light of the world—the radiance of God’s glory—bringing God’s light into the darkness of man’s heart/life.

His healing this blind man would signify the work of all-powerful/loving/gracious God, being done thru the One He had sent to man, bringing Light into man’s darkness.

Jesus’ disciples had the priceless privilege of taking part in Messiah’s ministry, & witnessing His doing God’s work.

It was imperative that they waste no time in idle speculation, because night was coming, when Jesus would be taken away from them, as He returned to the Father.

The disciples needed to adopt Jesus own sense of urgency.

**We, like they, need to get to work, as our Savior did.**

For us here/now, it is “*day*” as long as we are still alive in this present world.

If we are to evangelize the lost, we must do it now—or never.

When we go home to be with the Lord, we'll have no further opportunity to do so.

And Jesus said, in His Sermon on the Mount, that we too are the light of the world (Mt 5:14).

Understanding this, the Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter, said he preached “as a dying man to dying men.”

#### **\*\* 4) Jesus Heals**

This too was an expectation of Messiah.

Messiah Himself had said in Jer 30:17=> *“I will restore you to health & I will heal you of your wounds.”*

[**Verses 6-7**]=> *“When He had said this [that He is the Light & must be doing the works of God], He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, / and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, **Sent**). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.”*

**No one knows for sure why Jesus used this method.**

It may have been to help the blind man respond w/ the obedience of faith, when he went to the pool & washed off the clay, as X had commanded him.

Obviously, he couldn't see what Jesus was doing, but he could feel the mixture of saliva/clay on his face.

In this way, it was like Elisha's telling leprous Naaman to wash himself in the Jordan River in order to be healed.

**John makes a point of the fact that “*Siloam*” means “**Sent**.”**

Originally, it was prob. named that because water was constantly sent by gravity flow thru a tunnel, from a spring outside the city, under the city's wall, and into the pool of Siloam inside the city.

This pool was designed to save Jerusalem's people from destruction, whenever foreign armies laid siege to it. The people of Jerusalem would always have plenty of water.

In that sense it was looked upon as a blessing from God, & was described by Isaiah as "*the gently flowing waters of Shiloah*" (Isa 8:6).

So in Shiloah (later called Siloam) the people of Jerusalem saw their dependence on God, a/w/a His protection, & His gentle/faithful provision.

God's ultimate provision, however, was to be the Messiah, whom God would send to them from heaven.

He was to be the "*sent One*" from God.

Jesus was the Messiah, the "*sent One.*"

In Jn 17:18, He prayed to the Father=> "*As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them* [His disciples] *into the world.*"

In Jn 7, during a ceremony in which water from the Pool of Siloam was poured over the altar in the Temple, Jesus stood & shouted=> "*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. / He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will*

*flow rivers of living water'” (7:37-38).*

Jesus was sent from God to be the Source of the water of life, just as the Pool of Siloam provided an endless supply of physical water.

In sending the blind man to wash the clay off his face, in the Pool of Siloam, Jesus was gently bringing him to the realization that He is the Messiah sent by God to heal man, body/soul, giving him a healthy life & giving him eternal life.

When the man obeyed X's command & washed in Siloam's pool, he suddenly/miraculously received his sight.

The Light of the world had enabled this man to see light in the world, for the first time, even as Jesus gave life to the man's soul.

The words of John came true in his heart=> *“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men” (Jn 1:4).*

**Imagine, if you can, that scene as the man washed the clay off his eyelids & looked out of those eyes for the first time in his life.**

He must have seen reflections of sunlight dancing off the surface of the water in the pool.

Never had he needed to squint before this, but now he did.

Imagine too his looking at colorful birds/flowers/butterflies, such as those we saw earlier, and which we enjoy all the time w/o even thinking about it.

He had heard/felt/smelt them before, but now he connected these other sensations w/ his newfound sight, prob. gazing at their beauty for minutes at a time.

**The Messiah had entered his life, bringing a new creation.**

What a wonderful/joyous thing Jesus had done this day for this blind man in this city of Jerusalem.

He who had created man from dust on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, now recreated this blind man's blind eyes, using clay, His own saliva, the man's obedience, and (most importantly) X's own divine power.

He is almighty God, come to earth doing the works of God, through miraculous healing & He can recreate eyes in a moment of time.

Saving a soul is His ultimate miraculous act of re-creation.

He takes the spiritually dead, & creates them anew, so that old things pass away, and new things come into their lives, including spiritual sight/insight.

\* He could do that for anyone here right now, but first a person must realize that he is spiritually blind/dead, just as the blind man realized long before he was physically blind.

\* Secondly, a person must believe that the same Jesus who healed the blind man, can give him spiritual life and trust Him to do so.

Let's pray that Jesus will do the wonderful works of God among us, illuminating souls, giving them life so that they can/will reach out to Him for their salvation, forgiving their sins, and saving their souls today—& that all this will serve to glorify God.

***“God’s Works on Display”***

July 13, 2014

Text: John 9:1-7

1. In today's text Jesus will heal a man who was born blind, as a display of the divine power our [14 Savior] Himself wielded.

Jn 9:32; Isa 42:6-7; Mt 11:4-5

2. But Jesus' healing the blind man will also be a display of God the [18 Father's] power, love, and goodness.

Jn 9:4; Eph 3:20

**Today's text uses the account of Jesus' healing the blind man as evidence that He is the Messiah—who cares, who instructs, who works, and who heals...**

\* **Jesus Cares**

**[John 9:1]**

3. God sovereignly intended for Jesus to heal the man as a display of God's works; but on a personal level Jesus responded to the man out of His own personal

[10 care] and compassion.

Jms 1:5

4. We were all born just as blind spiritually as this man had been blind physically; Jesus is the [10 only] One who can heal such blindness.

Acts 16:9

### \* Jesus Instructs

#### [Verse 2]

5. If this man was born blind as a punishment for his sin, he must have committed that sin as a fetus in the womb; this notion is absurd, but [18 rabbinic] theology allowed for it.

Gen 25:22; Deut 24:16; Ex 20:5; I Cor 11:30

6. There is no way for us to establish a cause and effect linkage between specific [10 sins] and specific cases of suffering.

Lk 13:4-5; Job 22:4-5; Acts 28:4

7. The disciples had concluded that the blind man's blindness was punishment for somebody's sin; Jesus stopped and used this situation to [18 instruct] them in the truth.

#### [Verse 3]

Jms 1:2-3; Ex 14:18

8. In the case of the blind man, God had purposed that his blindness should serve as a backdrop against which the works of God could be displayed through His [8 Son].

### \* Jesus Works

#### [Verse 4]

9. Jesus spent His whole life doing the works [8 God] had sent Him to do on earth.

10. There is an urgency about our doing the works of God; we have only a limited amount of time to serve our Lord in this world, reversing the effects of [8 sin] on it, and redeeming the lost.

Eph 5:16

#### [Verse 5]

Mt 5:14

### \* Jesus Heals

**[Verses 6-7]**

11. John makes a point of the fact that “*Siloam*” means “[10 Sent].”  
Isa 8:6; Jn 17:18; 7:37-38
  
12. In sending the blind man to wash the clay off his face in the Pool of Siloam, Jesus was gently bringing him to the realization that He is the Messiah [10 sent] by God to heal man body and soul.  
Jn 1:4
  
13. Let’s pray that Jesus will do the wonderful works of God among us, illuminating souls, giving them life so that they will reach out to Him for their salvation, forgiving their sins, and [14 saving] their souls today.