

## **“Now I See”**

### **John 9:1-15**

*Bryn MacPhail / Feb. 20, 2011*

Over the course of His ministry Jesus performed many miracles.

John’s Gospel, however, only records 7 of them.

This morning’s account of the healing of a man born blind is the 6<sup>th</sup> of those miracles recorded by John.

If you were to skip ahead to John chapter 20, you would see John’s rationale for including these particular miracles.

In 20:30ff, John writes:

**“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”**

That statement helps us immensely, doesn’t it?

While the miracles of Jesus are massively impressive, *the miracles are not really the point.*

The miracles of Jesus are intended to point us to something greater.

*The miracles are intended to encourage our belief in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God.*

To put it another way, the miracles serve the message.

The miracles authenticate the message as they demonstrate the power and dominion Jesus has over this world.

The miracles are also instructive in that they teach us something about ourselves and about God by way of analogy.

With each of these things in mind, let's begin to unpack the lessons contained in John chapter 9.

Our passage begins with Jesus noticing a man born blind, who was evidently begging for alms near the Temple gates.

The disciples ask: **"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?"** (v.2).

Immediately we are introduced to the age-old question about the problem of pain—"Why do bad things happen?"

The disciples' question reveals two common, but erroneous, assumptions.

It was commonly assumed in ancient pagan cultures that suffering in this life was retribution for sin committed in a previous life.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> assumption, which was common in many ancient religions, was that the sins of the parents are often visited upon their children in the form of suffering.

Jesus rejects each of these assumptions outright—“**Neither this man nor his parents sinned**” (v.3).

Yes, the man born blind was a sinner in need of forgiveness, just as every human being is. But Jesus is clear: particular sin was not the cause of this man’s blindness.

The disciples wanted to identify the reason behind the man’s suffering but they erred in their assumptions.

As a pastor, I am regularly asked to articulate my views of the subject of suffering.

Thinking of passages like this, I try to be very careful with my answer.

Thinking of passages like this, I conclude that the answer or the reason behind a particular suffering is often very difficult to discern.

And yet, it is interesting to read Jesus’ entire response.

Jesus says that *there is a reason*—there is a purpose behind the suffering of this man.

Jesus says, **“this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life”** (v.3).

What can we say about suffering?

From this account we are reminded that the reason behind a particular suffering is extremely difficult to see (if not altogether impossible).

But we also have the reminder that *there nonetheless is a reason*. There is a purpose.

Therefore, we have the hope that our suffering is not in vain.

Having responded to His disciples’ question, Jesus then proceeds to do something entirely unusual. And, if we’re honest, we’ll readily confess that what Jesus does is actually quite disgusting.

John reports that Jesus mixes some dirt with His saliva and rubs it on the blind man’s eyes (v.6).

Sheer curiosity makes me wonder what the blind man’s initial response to this was.

I don’t think we should imagine the man immediately saying, “Oh, I get it, spit and dirt on my face—you’re going to heal my blindness!”

I wonder if the man’s initial response was one of disgust. I wonder if Jesus offended him.

I wonder if the man's initial response was doubt and scepticism.

Whatever his initial response was, it eventually gave way to obedience.

Jesus instructs the man, "**Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam**" (v.7).

The man born blind complies. John says that the man went and washed and came away seeing.

I think there is an obvious analogy to the Gospel here.

The apostle Paul explains to the Corinthians that to some people the Gospel is foolishness, and to others it is offensive.

The Gospel describes how God takes on human flesh, lives a perfect life, and yet is arrested as a criminal and is executed upon a Roman cross.

The Gospel tells us that by trusting in this God-man, and in His death, we gain salvation.

To some that sounds about as plausible as healing a blind man with dirt and spit.

Some hear the Gospel and are *sceptical*... "This sounds too easy—this sounds too good to be true."

Some hear the Gospel and are *bothered* by it. They are bothered by all the talk of sin and judgment. They are bothered by the notion that salvation is only possible by trusting in the gruesome death of Jesus.

But, thankfully, some hear the Gospel message and *believe it* and, as a result, come away seeing.

It is a huge deal for a man born blind to be able to see.

So we're likely not surprised to see this miracle become "the talk of the town".

And we're probably not surprised to read that the religious leaders of the day wanted to investigate this miracle.

The Pharisees ask the man how he had received his sight.

I love the simplicity of the man's reply: "**He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see**" (v.15).

Again, this is an excellent analogy for how salvation comes:

God does something (He initiates healing)

We do something (we believe in the Gospel)

And then we see

The healing of a man born blind is massively significant. And yet, this healing is not the main point.

This healing demonstrates *the will and the power of God to heal spiritual blindness*.

It is fitting then that Jesus and this man meet up again in verse 35.

[read John 9:35-38]

The man who was healed of his physical blindness now gets healing for his spiritual blindness.

At first identification, the man born blind refers to his healer as “**the man they call Jesus**” (v.11).

During their second encounter, however, the man confesses “**Lord, I believe**” and proceeds to worship Jesus.

Permit me to draw out one final aspect from this analogy of sight.

Though the man’s sight was perfectly restored, there would have been many things he would have been incapable of identifying.

The man would need help comprehending what he was now seeing.

He would need someone to help him to identify landmarks and the various species of animals, insects, and birds.

He could see, but the work of discovery still lay ahead.

Friends, if the Lord has healed your spiritual blindness, remember that the work of spiritual discovery remains.

Perhaps there are many here who share my experience of reading the Bible before I was a Christian and then reading it after receiving Christ.

I recall reading many passages and asking myself: “How did I not see that the first time?”

The answer: *I was blind.*

I needed a cure for my spiritual blindness before I could see what the Bible was saying.

Now, it’s also possible that your presence here today is not as a seeing person, but rather you are here as someone looking to discover more about Jesus.

It’s possible that you have come here as a person with impaired vision seeking healing.

And maybe the Gospel looks like the intellectual equivalent to putting mud on your eyes....

But I want to encourage you: This is how Jesus heals.

God uses humble means and a simple message to initiate healing.



What is left is for us to wash the mud off of our eyes—what is left is for us to believe this Gospel.

Once we place our trust in Jesus, we will be able to confess with the man born blind, **“I was blind, but now I see.”** (v.25).

And with new vision, the privilege of discovery awaits.

I don't imagine that this healed man continued to beg for alms at the Temple gates.

I don't imagine that he went home and sat around his living room all day.

I imagine this man became engrossed in discovering what he had missed seeing all of these years.

Similarly, if we are “seeing people” in the spiritual sense, we ought to be seeking to discover the beauty of Christ that we were previously missing.

And so my challenge to you this morning is to dig into the Scriptures with a view to discovering all that God is for us in Jesus.

If I were to generalize I would say to you that those who go to the Scriptures with impaired vision see religion, and those who go to the Scriptures with restored sight see a relationship.

Jesus, "The Light of the world", awaits you.

Let's go to him. Let's worship Him. Amen.