

v. 1-5

***“As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”***

- **What does the disciples' question reveal about their beliefs regarding people born with disabilities?** There was and is a common association of sickness or malady with specific sins. The eastern view of reincarnation often leads to the conclusion that any sickness or disability is the result of sins committed in a former life. For many Jews, the blessing and cursing motif throughout the Old Testament lends itself to the idea that if things go well you are being blessed and if things go poorly, you are being judged. In Christian circles, it's not uncommon to see this, especially in more Charismatic circles with prosperity theology and the word of faith movement. And there is little doubt that the Bible itself teaches this to some degree, with many specific cases of people whose suffering or blessing is a direct result of their sin or disobedience. Likewise, the wisdom literature speaks frequently about the good that comes from following the right path and the evil that comes from straying. At the same time, the Scriptures witness to the inconsistent application of these principles in our current world - hence the common refrain in the Psalms, if the wicked are judged and the righteous saved then why do I suffer as I do while my enemy walks unhindered. Similarly, Job and other examples. In fact, this inconsistency and disconnect is a strong driver of the expectation for God to act, for there to be a final judgment and vindication - that is, we know God is a righteous judge, so there must be a reckoning to set these wrongs right. However, it clearly misses that final vindication and reckoning to conclude that all justice is truly dealt in this life and therefore if someone faces suffering, then it's because of sin. It may very well be, since actions do have consequences, but we cannot be quick to assume such.
- **Do we need to adjust the way we view people with ailments?**
- So, in this story, the disciples are reflecting the common view that this

disability is a result of sin. The challenge here was when a man is born with this ailment, who's sin was it? The Rabbinic debate would be between a man being preemptively judged for his sin, or that he is in fact suffering for the sin of his parents.

- As usual, Jesus enters into a Rabbinic controversy only to blow up both sides. Jesus says that no one specific sin caused this man's blindness, but that this provided an opportunity for the works of God to be manifest in him. In the chaos and pain of a world filled with sin, Jesus sees an opportunity to heal and restore, to shine the light of the new creation into the old. This is the confidence we have - that whatever ills befall, we can trust that God has a greater means in mind and is using these ailments for our own good and for his glory. Romans 8:28 is not a cliché and may not be appropriate to cite to someone in the midst of suffering, but is a firm foundation on which to stand - ALL things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purposes. This does not mean that every situation turns out the way that we want it to, but that God will work in every situation that which is for our good and for his glory. This glory of suffering, which is not always apparent to the one going through it, and they may actually not see it all in this life - seen for example in
  - Joseph
  - Job
  - Paul
- Given this teaching of the glory that God works through suffering, we should check our own hearts and attitudes and how frequently we respond just as the disciples do. When things are well, how well I have been doing, how my children are so well-behaved. How about when someone suffers for something, like goes through a divorce - does it ever cross our minds that they might be experience that due to godliness and obedience (c.f. 1 Cor. 7)? We should be slow to make the connections with sin and quick to look for ways that God is at work.
- **What do you think about the fact that God allowed the man in this story to be born blind and to suffer**

**many years, just so that Jesus would have someone to heal? What difficult circumstances in your life may have a purpose which only God understands?**

- Jesus reminds us that he is the light of the world, which connects this back with the previous discourse. What we're going to witness is a playing out of this theme. What does he mean, night is coming when no one can work? Is he referring to his crucifixion?

#### v. 6-12

***Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."***

- **Why do you think Jesus had the man go and wash, instead of just healing him immediately?**
- Jesus sends the man to the pool named Sent and he comes back seeing.
- "The name of the pool bears symbolic importance for Jesus. More than twenty times in this Gospel, Jesus is described as the one who has been "sent" by God (e.g., 4: 34; 5: 23, 37; 7: 28; 8: 26; 12: 44; 14: 24). In other words, the blind man is being told to go wash in the place called "sent," by the One who was "sent" by God. Jesus, then, is the source of his healing, not the pool.<sup>1"</sup>
- Everyone is thrown for a loop. This couldn't be the blind beggar, could it? He keeps insisting, explaining that Jesus healed him. However, Jesus has disappeared.
- The blind man's first witness is - I don't know who or where he is, but this man Jesus healed me.
- **How does this miracle fulfill prophecy? What does it tell us about Christ? (Isaiah 35:5; 42:7; Matt. 11:1-5)**

## v. 13-17

***They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So 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." Some 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. So 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."***

- They bring him to the Pharisees, who should surely know what to think of this. (why? Probably because Jesus was involved) They question him about what Jesus did. The man tells his story once again.
- Here we learn that the healing took place on a Sabbath - once again Jesus has ruffled feathers in Jewish leadership, continuing to build a reputation for dismissing the Sabbath.
- Some of the Pharisees conclude that Jesus could not be from God because he does not keep the Sabbath, others thinking a little more clearly, ask - "how could someone not from God do these signs?"
- It's interesting throughout this whole section that they refuse to say his name. Why do you think that is?
- Ironically, since they can't see for themselves, they ask the blind man who now sees.
- His second witness to Jesus is: He is a prophet.

## v. 18-23

***The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."***

- Now the focus of the story briefly shifts to the blind man's parents - the Jews don't believe this really is the same man, so they bring the parents in who testify that yes, this is indeed our son and yes he was born blind.
- However, when it comes to confesses the truth of what transpired, they are afraid - the fear of being kicked out of the synagogue makes them pass on bearing witness to the miracle Jesus has worked, and instead they say, "We don't know how or who, go ask him."
- **Describe fears you've had about speaking plainly regarding your beliefs about Jesus because of the social consequences.**

## v. 24-34

***So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.***

- This is a fascinating exchange that takes place here. A man who has been blind from birth, without education or understanding, is debating with very learned and well-educated men of Judaism.
- They call the man in and say "give glory to God, this man is a sinner" (What does this mean?). They clearly recognize that this healing is something only God can do, but seek to distance the act from Jesus.

- The blind man won't budge, precisely because he *is* giving glory to God, but simply repeats his testimony - I don't know what he is, but I could not see and now I see.
- After they ask again, he says - do you want to become his disciples too?
- They scoff and say they are disciples of Moses, they know God spoke to Moses, but they don't know where Jesus came from.
- The man's response is priceless - you don't know where he comes from? Never in the history of the world has someone healed a man born blind. This is something only God can do.
- For this testimony he is cast out.

• **What principle is illustrated by the fact that the blind man, after being identified as a disciple of Christ, is thrown out of the synagogue? (vv. 26-28; see Jn. 15:20; Hebrews 13:13).**

v. 35-41

***Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "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. Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."*** (John 9:1–41, ESV)

- When Jesus hears of his witness and his persecution, he seeks him out and gives him a greater revelation of himself. The blind man now sees wholly and believes truly. In contrast, the Pharisees, who were sure that they had the truth and were a light to the blind - they are shown to be blind and not see.
- **Why does this man believe while the Pharisees remain unbelieving?**
- The Pharisees - who were confident in their knowledge and religious insight, are shown to have less understanding than a sincere believer

- who has had his eyes opened in an encounter with Jesus.
- This last section brings to light this whole encounter, and ties it together with the previous chapters. Jesus, the light of the world has brought judgment into this world, which consists of two things:
    - Blinding those who see (Casting down the proud)
    - Giving sight to those who are blind (Lifting up the humble)
  - We have the Pharisees, representing the Jews, casting out the former blind man - effectively making him a Gentile. Jesus brings sight and salvation to the Gentiles while bringing judgment and revealing the blindness of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> Burge, Gary M. (2009-08-22). John (NIV Application Commentary, The) (p. 231). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.