

Are We Blind, Too?
John 9:1-41
March 30, 2014

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided. Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out. Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who

were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

Grace, mercy, and peace from the one who brings sight to the blind our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Have you ever played the child's game where you were blindfolded and led around by a friend? This game teaches you to trust another person. It also gives you a glimpse of what it is like to be blind: darkness, moving around slowly and cautiously, unable to do things you formerly took for granted. When the blindfold was removed, what a relief! Sight! Light! Normal activity!

Blindness was the condition of the man in today's text. He was born blind and lived in a world of utter darkness until he came into contact with Jesus, the Light of the World. That was the best day of his life. But the miracle of restoring his physical sight pales compared with the second miracle this man would experience.

The important miracle occurs when Jesus moves this man from sin and unbelief into the light of faith, forgiveness, and life. The first miracle changed this man's present, but the second miracle changed this man's eternity. Jesus continues to perform this eternity-changing miracle. We watch it happen as we watch unbelievers enter into the family of God.

To fully appreciate the account of these miracles, we are going to focus on just four words from the text. Many people reacted to Jesus in our reading, but one group, the Pharisees at the end of the reading, asks the pivotal question. "Are we blind, too?"

First, let's consider the man, who was healed. Was he blind? There are two answers: yes and yes. Yes, the man was physically blind. He had been blind from the day he was born. He lived in a world where blackness was the only thing he could perceive. This man had no idea what his parents looked like, what his hometown looked like, what a tree looked like. He didn't even know what he looked like. So, our first answer is yes. The man was certainly blind.

But there is a second yes. There is another blindness this man suffered from. He was also spiritually blind. Spiritual blindness occurs when someone, through unbelief or ignorance, is unable to see Jesus as the true Light of the World. The first blindness, the physical blindness, is something the man in the story could live with. The second blindness, the spiritual blindness, is something the man could only die with. Spiritual blindness leads to the ultimate death – eternity in hell – eternal separation from the love of God.

Jesus healed this man's physical blindness as a way of demonstrating to the man, and to all around, exactly whom he was. The physical healing was an opportunity for everyone there to open their eyes and see the Son of God standing among them.

Jesus healed this man's spiritual blindness as an act of love. This man, just like you and me, was and is a child of God. This poor blind man was one of Jesus' creations. Jesus loves his creations – every one of us. How much? Jesus loves us to death – his death.

Now, let's look at the Pharisees. Were the Pharisees blind? There are two answers here also: no and yes. No, the Pharisees weren't physically blind. They had the advantage of seeing the world around them. Maybe that's one reason why the restoration of the blind man's sight didn't really impress them. They had no way to identify with the blind man. Not having the malady, they couldn't fully appreciate the cure.

But there is also a yes in regard to the Pharisees' blindness. Yes, like the original condition of the blind man's soul, the Pharisees were spiritually blind. The source of their blindness was their mistaken belief that they weren't spiritually blind.

These Pharisees looked to their ancestry as children of Abraham and disciples of Moses as proof there was nothing wrong with their spiritual eyesight. They allowed their status, as God's chosen people, to blind them to the fact that God was walking among them. They were so blinded by their arrogance they couldn't even accept a miracle no human could perform.

Let's bring this all home. Are we blind? This question has three answers: no, yes, and no. No, to my knowledge, none of us here today are physically blind. We have the blessing of sight. We can see the beauty of God's creation. By the way, when was the last time you thanked God for the blessing of sight?

But our sight also allows us to see some things that aren't so beautiful. We see man's inhumanity to man. We see hatred displayed in all kinds of ways. We see children starved and abused. We see people murdered for the sake of a few coins. We see ethnic cleansing and violent religious intolerance. We see rampant abortion. In short, we see the darkness, the blindness, which accompanies unbelief and sin.

Next, yes, we all were blind at one time. We were just as spiritually blind as the blind man and the Pharisees. In Psalm 51, King David writes: *Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me* (Ps 51:5). Because of the sinfulness we inherited from our parents, we were all spiritually blind at birth.

No one comes into this world spiritually neutral. And only Jesus came into this world spiritually pure. Everyone else, including us, were born spiritually corrupt and blind to our loving God.

The third answer to are we blind is no. With the blind man in the story, we can say, "I was blind but now I see!" In the life-giving, cleansing waters of baptism, God anointed each of us with his enlightening Holy Spirit. God brought the light of his truth into our hearts. Not because of whom we are or what we've done, but because he loves us with a love that looks past whom we are and what we've done.

Furthermore, God's enlightenment doesn't stop at baptism. God has given us his Holy Scripture so we might use our enhanced spiritual sight to see the love he has for us. In the Bible, we learn about the forgiveness we have in the righteousness of Jesus. Our restored spiritual sight gives us the ability to see through the darkness of sin all the way to the cross.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we have light and we have sight. And how is this possible? It's amazing grace. It's God's amazing grace that allows him to see what we, in our sinful condition, could never see.

In his amazing grace, God saw our sin and he knew its consequences – eternal death and separation from him and his love. God saw the sinfulness of mankind before he ever created Adam and Eve. God saw our condition, but God couldn't bear to look on our condition. So God took action.

In his amazing grace, God sent us his Son, Jesus Christ, true God and true man, to bring light into our world. Jesus is truly the Light of the world. When Jesus came into the world, the darkness, brought on by the blindness of sin, was driven out. Jesus brought light, life, and sight to the spiritually blind.

In his amazing grace, God placed the faith in your heart that allows you to receive the forgiveness Jesus won for you with his perfect life, his sacrificial death, and his triumphant resurrection. It's an act of pure amazing grace that God should give you the gift of faith because, up until that time of his gift, you were his enemy.

In his amazing grace, God has provided all you have. It's because of God's grace you live in the greatest nation in the world and experience the tremendous freedom we enjoy. It's an act of grace that provides you with house, home, spouse, children, food, property, and every other blessing in this life.

In his amazing grace, Jesus Christ, God, has promised: *I will be with you always even to the end of the age* (Mt 28:20). The amazing grace of our God is promised to us every day of our lives and it will be with us as we leave this world to be with him forever.

Because of God's amazing grace, our answer to the Pharisees' question, "Are we blind, too?" is an emphatic NO! The amazing grace of God has touched our spiritual eyes and the blindness of sin is gone.

Now that we're no longer blind, what are we going to do with our grace-given sight? Let me ask a question. If you had a friend who was suffering from a terminal illness and, if you knew the only doctor who could cure your friend, would you take your friend to that doctor? Of course, you would.

The world is full of people who are terminally ill with the disease of unbelief. Not only are these poor people terminally ill, their sin of unbelief has left them blind. They don't have

the spiritual sight that's required for them to find the Great Physician on their own.

I hope our role in all this is clear to you. We have the sight the world lacks. We can and must take the Word of God to the world. God chooses to work through his divinely inspired Scripture. Paul writes: *Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word* (Rom 10:17). When we share the good news of the Gospel with an unbelieving world, we bring Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, to them.

Let us pray. God of all grace, we thank and praise you for your gift of faith which has cured our spiritual blindness and allowed us to see our Savior. Lord, place in each of our hearts a measure of your love so we are moved to take the light of your Son into our sin-darkened world. We pray this in the name of your Son, our Savior and the Light of the world. Amen.