

March 19, 2023  
Fourth Sunday in Lent  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

John 9:1 – 41 (Isaiah 42:14 – 21; Ephesians 5:8 – 14)

## JESUS OPENS THE EYES OF THE BLIND

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St John, the 9th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Physical eyesight depends on light. Without light, there is no sight. The visual ability of humans and animals is the result of a complex interaction of light entering the eye, being turned into electric signals, and then the brain turning those signals into the images you see. But without light, there is no sight.

Doctors describe those who are totally blind as having “*no light perception*.” For the person who has been blind since birth, you and I might think the only color they see is black because black is what we perceive when all light is absent. But for the blind, absence of light is all that they have ever known. They have no other visual experience to compare against. To the blind, various colors, including black, is a verbal concept that is associated with certain smells, tastes, sounds, or feelings.

Blindness is a theme that runs throughout the book of Isaiah. Speaking through His prophet, the Lord God characterizes both those who are idolatrous and those who had rejected Him as blind. They had become like the false gods they worshiped. Just like their idols, they had eyes that did not see. (cf: Psalm 115:5, 8; 135:16, 18) The Israelites complained that God did not see them. (cf: Isaiah 40:27) But just it was the exact opposite. Their idolatry has made them unable to see God.

There is something far worse than experiencing physical blindness. That is spiritual blindness. In our Old Testament reading the prophet Isaiah announces God’s rebuke of Israel for their spiritual blindness. But He also announces God’s promise to lead and light the way and to remain with His people. Just as God promises to lead:

“... *the blind* [Israel] *in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known...*” (Isaiah 42:16)

Jesus leads His blind disciples of all times along the way unto eternal life.

In our Gospel reading this morning St John tells us of a man who was born blind and it immediately causes speculation among Jesus’ disciples. Even though God commanded through Moses that every person stands before God based on the condition of his heart (cf: Deuteronomy

24:16; 30:6–10) many people believed that children bore the punishment for their parent’s sins – or the punishment of their own sins. (Exodus 20:5) The disciples are thinking that, if this man is blind from birth, someone had to have sinned. So they ask Jesus, who was it? Was it his parents who sinned or perhaps some sin he himself committed in the womb.

In answering them, Jesus’ springs a surprise. The man’s blindness is due to neither this man nor his parents. It is not an either/or situation of who is to blame. It is nobody’s fault. God did not cause it, but God is going to use it.

***“Jesus answered, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”*** (John 9:3)

It does not make sense to you and me, but the foolishness of God is always wiser than the wisdom of men. (cf: 1 Corinthians 1:25) Like He often does, Jesus does not answer the question but He points toward faith and salvation. The man is blind that the works of God might be displayed in him. Since he is blind God is going to use his blindness to make God’s glory visible to everyone who sees this soon to be formerly blind man.

Do not be deceived. This does not mean that God caused this man to be born blind just so He could make an example of his suffering. God does not create or cause human suffering. Our God is a loving and compassionate God. He works His will ***through*** your sicknesses and sufferings. His grace is sufficient for you because His power is made perfect in weakness. (cf: 2 Corinthians 12:9)

To be sure, all suffering, all physical illnesses and disabilities are an effect of the fallen and sinful world in which we live. Some of your suffering might be due to your poor decisions, lifestyle habits, smoking, drinking, and overeating. And it is true that children often repeat the sins of the parents and then suffer the same consequences. But that does not mean that you and your children are being directly punished by God because of a particular sin.

This man’s blindness is only one of the many different symptoms of the deadly condition called sin. We could spend all day naming different sins, but they are all symptoms of the sinful nature of our Old Adam. Sin is not only what you do and do not do. Sin is who you are by nature. Far worse than being physically blind, the man in our text and you are born spiritually blind. Due to the sin that has been inherited by all mankind from our ancestor Adam, the man and you and I have no spiritual perception of the true Light. Without light, there is no sight. True Light and spiritual illumination comes solely from Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and Savior of the world. Jesus says:

***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*** (John 8:12)

Jesus is the Word become flesh who was with God in the beginning, forming Adam from the dust of the ground. In our text, this same Jesus spits and makes mud from the dust of the ground to anoint the blind man's eyes. And then Jesus tells the man to:

***“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.”*** (John 9:7)

Going all the way back to the early church fathers, this text has been viewed for its baptismal overtones. Because you and I are born spiritually blind, we cannot see God for who He is – and – therefore we cannot see ourselves for who we are. You are born groping in a spiritual darkness. The Light who is Christ shines upon you, but without the eyes of faith, you cannot see the Light. God must touch your eyes and wash them in the water to which He sends you, the Siloam waters of Holy Baptism. It is there that you were granted the eyes of faith and were illumined by the Holy Spirit. At the font you received Christ who is the Light of the world. He dwells in you and His Light shines through your life.

God’s mercy is much greater than His wrath. He God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. (cf: John 3:17) Every day, fellow believers that you know are falling into spiritual darkness. Many feel that they no longer need to attend worship and receive God’s gifts through Word and Sacrament, even though scripture tells us otherwise.

Many people do not want to hear the truth of sin and salvation. They cannot handle the truth of their sin because it hurts, it offends, and makes them feel bad. People want to hear that they are basically good and moral people who will get to heaven regardless of how they live. You and I, too, are tempted to slide back into the spiritual darkness. Like those times when God does not answer your prayer as quickly or exactly as you desire. When illness or disease strikes and you do not understand why God does not heal you or your loved one. You do not understand why sometimes you must suffer, forgetting that God uses your suffering to make His glory visible to everyone who sees you in your suffering. Apart from Christ who is the Light, you and I are nothing more than deaf, dumb, and blind sinners who are by nature sinful and unclean.

The blind man never sought out Jesus. Jesus came to him, anointing his eyes to remove his blindness. Afterwards, the formerly blind man recognized that if this man were not from God, he could do nothing. (cf: John 9:33) Having heard that the man had been put out of the synagogue Jesus found him and said:

***“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”<sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”<sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.”<sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.***  
(John 9:35–38)

Like the blind man, you too, were born blind but have been given the gift of sight. Although you were in the blindness of your sin, now you see. By faith in Jesus you have been:

***“... justified by [God’s] grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”*** (Romans 3:24)

Paul states it perfectly in our epistle text, saying:

***“... at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light<sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true).”*** (cf: Ephesians 5:8–10)

You do not walk as children of the Light to earn God’s merit and grace. No. You walk as children of the Light because as a baptized child of God, you bear the fruits of Light. Good words and deeds flow naturally from one who has been forgiven and illumined in Christ.

Spiritual eyesight depends on Light. Without the Light of Christ, there is no sight. God saw you trapped in the outer darkness of your sins which separated you from Him. (cf: Matthew 8:12) So He sent His Son Jesus, the Light of the world, into this world of darkness and blindness so those who do not see may see. He was sent to enlighten the Gentiles, and for glory of His people Israel. (Luke 2:32) Because Christ's salvation is for all people, the Light will come to shine upon every nation through the preaching of the Gospel.

Jesus comes to you right here in the Divine Service and shines the Light of life on you through His Word. He shines upon you the gift of forgiveness of sins through His Body and Blood in His Holy Supper. It is Jesus that called you out of darkness into his marvelous Light. (cf: 1 Peter 2:9) In Him you have forgiveness of sins, light, life, and salvation.

Spiritual sight is a free gift to you, but it came at a great cost. Jesus carried humanity's blind sins to the cross and in the darkness of Good Friday, He put your sin to death as He paid the price with His precious blood. As the light of Easter morning broke over the horizon, the shining angels announced that Jesus is alive and victorious over the darkness of sin, death, and the grave. (cf: John 20:12) The risen Christ continually cures your spiritual blindness through His Word and Sacrament.

Jesus is the Light of the world. (cf: John 9:5) In Him is life, and the life is the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (cf: John 1:3-5) He brings sight to the spiritually blind and those living in darkness. By the power of the Holy Spirit, all who believe and trust in Jesus with eyes of faith are illuminated and free to love and serve your neighbor just as God, in Christ, loves and serves you. Regardless of what your physical sight is like, your spiritual sight has been perfected. Like the man who received his sight in today's text, by faith in Christ, you have spiritual sight and will live with you Savior forever.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.