

Rev. Seth D. Bode Sermon 364, 03-15-2020 Lent 3

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

JOHN 9

As Jesus was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that God’s works might be revealed in connection with him. ⁴I must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the World.”

⁶After saying this, Jesus spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and spread the mud on the man’s eyes. ⁷“Go,” Jesus told him, “wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means “Sent”). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

¹³They brought this man who had been blind to the Pharisees. ¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees also asked him how he received his sight.

“He put mud on my eyes,” the man told them. “I washed, and now I see.”

¹⁶Then some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath.” Others were saying, “How can a sinful man work such miraculous signs?”

There was division among them, ¹⁷so they said to the blind man again, “What do you say about him, because he opened your eyes?”

The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

³⁴They answered him, “You were entirely born in sinfulness! Yet you presume to teach us?” And they threw him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had thrown him out. When he found him, he asked, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

³⁶“Who is he, sir,” the man replied, “that I may believe in him?”

³⁷Jesus answered, “You have seen him, and he is the very one who is speaking with you.”

³⁸Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” and he knelt down and worshipped him.

³⁹Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, in order that those who do not see will see, and those who do see will become blind.”



No prophet in the Bible had ever cured blindness. “*Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind*” (9:32). In the Old Testament, there was special reference to blind people seeing:

- *The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down.* (Psalm 146:8)
- *Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf be unstopped.* (Isaiah 35:5)

So miracles of vision would be the powerful sign of the Messiah. In Luke 4 in the synagogue, Jesus read it from the scroll: *The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* (Luke 4:18-19)

These days it may seem like we are blinder than ever. Every email I get from my bank, gym, or grocery store explains they are monitoring the health situation, but there are no answers until further notice. Where can we go for 20/20 vision? How can we find certainty of the future and learn what's going to happen? What a perfect time for a messianic miracle for clear vision!

Today our gospel is miraculous. It doesn't just sharpen our vision; it gives us eyes to see our Savior anew. He heals a man's eyesight, and for the first time in the man's life, he was able to look, watch, glance, observe, stare, gaze, glare, gawk, peek, peep, and see. ...

JESUS GIVES CLEAR VISION

1. Jesus gives clear vision

Jesus famously established in John 8 that He is the Light of the world. This chapter He gave light to someone without any sense of sight.

A main feature is that it wasn't incomplete. Jesus declared Himself the light of the world and created a mud paste from His spit and the dirt. Many scholars have attempted to claim this as a healing potion. Early church fathers said that Jesus was actually rolling new human eyeballs together to fit into the man's eye-sockets. But these suggestions aren't necessary. Jesus actually seemed to close the man's eyesight further by sticking together something blinding on them.

The washing in the pool of Siloam was the cleaning event, the eye-opener. The waters of Siloam were "sent" from the mountains of Zion and Moriah. These silent waters flowed a great distance from royal places in Jerusalem. To the prophet Zechariah (13:1), Siloam was a symbol of the line of King David. "*In that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*" So Jesus used this eye-opening miracle to point to His royal line as King of kings.

The man wasn't brought to blurred vision. "He went and washed, and came back seeing" (7b). The man was able to see clearly who had healed Him. He could identify his Great Physician by His voice. He could match a name to a face, THE holy Name to this plain-looking prophet. His longing to see became reality, and it wasn't a half-hearted attempt. It was a completed miracle. The man saw, and his vision was clear, 20/20.

But it was the Sabbath. So the leaders and teachers of his day claimed that it couldn't be from God, because the Sabbath is a day of rest. Imagine that! They thought the miracle of giving clear, 20/20 vision was a sin against the day of worship. How blind were the teachers who were supposed to be able to see!

Such are the false teachers of today. They teach that we should have doubts in Jesus. We can like Him, they say, but we shouldn't view Him as the highest transcendent Being, the Most High God. They even blur other gods together, mixing them in with Him, and hint that Jesus is just one way, not the only way to see God. Jesus can be the same as Allah or the same as the Buddha or Krishna or Thor or any other god. Unfortunately for this view, each of these gods lays a different claim to truth. They disagree and cannot be the same as each other and still be true. So these false teachers blur the lines between truth and fiction.

The most popular way to blur the lines between the true God and a false god is to demand that we must buy His love with our works. But here was Jesus, claiming to be the Light of the world, and the only God who gives love not just to His friends, but to His enemies, namely sinners. He just gave it. Here we can see that by noting how ...

2. Jesus gives clear vision

Jesus does not go about explaining the science. Describing colors to this man was not going to solve his problem. How would you tell a person who can't see about red or gray or white? Jesus' miracle wasn't a matter of sharpening a man's vision. This was adding a fifth sense to a man who had never experienced it before. For the first time in the man's life, he was able to see.

In the same way, when the man was interrogated by the Pharisees, he found them blinder than he had been before. They were simply unable to see that Jesus was the Savior. It was like describing colors to blind men. They threw the seeing man out! They expelled him from the synagogue, the place of

worship. And, in so doing, they seemed to excommunicate the miracle itself. This miraculous evidence of Jesus' divine power just didn't fit their vision of God!

I was the first child in my immediate family to lose 20/20 vision, at age 9. I was a little absent-minded and ... slow ... about it, too. I remember shouting at the TV because I assumed the network was putting out an unclear image. The 3rd grade chalkboard wasn't clear to me. At the eye-dr. I got unfashionable square glasses instead of round. I didn't always fit in, but I did get to see.

Jesus Himself compares this gift of sight to the gift of faith. "*For judgment I came into this world, in order that those who do not see will see, and those who do see will become blind*" (39). We might bristle at the word "judgment," but you can also see how the Pharisees judged themselves. They became blind alright, even though we'd expect the religious leaders to be the first to see Jesus as their God and Lord. So they denied the saving faith that Jesus had to offer.

Faith doesn't just sharpen a man's spiritual sight. It doesn't cure half-good souls. (The arguably half-good souls refused to understand.) That is because when we recognize how deep sin penetrates and how much the Law exposes us, we realize we need a whole new sense of seeing. By the nature of our sin, we have no sense or experience of getting back to God.

We have no sense or experience of getting back to God ... without eyes that see by faith alone. When we agree with Jesus that is the "*Light of the world*" (9:5), we are saying He is a sight-giving light. He truly gives the clear vision of FAITH, just as He gave eyesight to the blind; just as He gave His life on the cross.

Faith in that cross actually adds a sense to the sinner. Faith allows us to see Jesus in a way we never saw God before. Faith holds onto Him for dear life, knowing the world without Him, the world around us, offers no path forward.

When darkness draws near in forms of a) panic b) disease c) death d) financial, political, economic worry, the Light opens eyes of faith to a) keep our heads, b) to God's Word, c) to heaven, being strangers here, d) to one more item on a list of things God is bigger than, e) & to prayer. What an awful year people now claim 2020 is. But I think with God you'll watch, observe, or see it with 20/20 vision.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.