

**+ John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39 + Fix Your Eyes on Jesus—The Revealing Light! +
+ 4th Sunday in Lent + Cross of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church – Liverpool, NY + 26 March 2017 +**

Imagine for a moment that all you can see is darkness—thick, inky darkness. You can't see anyone or anything. You can't make out shapes. All you see is darkness—lighter darkness during the day and total darkness at night. Now imagine that this darkness isn't new for you. In fact, you've never seen the light of day. You've never seen the sun shine or the stars twinkle. You've never seen spring flowers or autumn leaves. That also means you've never seen the faces of your parents or siblings or spouse or children or grandchildren or friends. In darkness you were formed and in darkness you were born. In darkness you grew up. From birth you've been blind. You can't move quickly anywhere because you've never been able to see what's in front of you. You have to depend much more on your other senses. You have to trust others to assist you, but then one day a man comes along, rubs some mud on your eyes, and tells you to wash it off. Suddenly the world you've never seen is revealed with a brilliant light you've never experienced.

That was the experience of a certain man born blind. Every morning his friends led him out to a spot along one of Jerusalem's narrow streets. When he awoke one Saturday morning, he figured it would be just another Sabbath—a day of rest like any other. After being led out to his usual spot, the man listened for passers-by to provide some spare change. Most ignored him and kept walking, but one man noticed the blind beggar. There seemed to be a small crowd around that man, who apparently was a rabbi or teacher named Jesus. One of the teacher's disciples asked, ***"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"***

The blind beggar wasn't offended. He often heard that question. In fact, when things got bad, he asked himself the same question. "What great sin have I committed to make me endure this life of darkness? Could my parents have done something they never told me about? Why has God been so harsh to make me suffer like this?" Jesus' disciples wondered the same thing.

The blind beggar was surprised at the answer. The teacher spoke with a wise authority the man had never heard. ***"Neither this man nor his parents sinned...This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him. We must do 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."*** The blind man wondered why Jesus had said. ***"...This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him...I am the light of the world."*** What was the teacher talking about?

Jesus crossed over to the blind man. He could hear Jesus spit on the ground—a rather unpleasant sound—but then, he heard the rubbing of a hand or foot on wet dirt. Then something unusual happened. The man could feel wet mud being packed over his blind eyes. Yes, it was a little disgusting. The darkness became darker. He heard the much closer voice of the teacher give him a single command, ***"Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam."***

The blind man was familiar with that pool in Jerusalem. Many thought its waters had some kind of healing power. He wasn't so sure about that, but he went anyway. With help from a friend, he made it to the Pool and bent down to wash the mud off his eyes. As he scrubbed the mud off, light began to appear. The more he washed the clearer the light became. With water streaming down his face, the man could suddenly see for the first time in his life and that light was brilliant. He didn't have to carefully walk to find his loved ones. No, he ran to tell them of the amazing miracle that had just happened. It wasn't the water. It was Jesus! ***"I was blind, and now I can see!"***

You may not know blindness, but like the blind man, you likely know suffering. You know pain or grief or worry or fear. You know difficulty or hardship or depression. You know sin. You know temptation and guilt and consequences that cause pain and grief and hardship. The disciples' question sounds all too familiar. "Whose sin caused this suffering? Someone must've done something to deserve it." Such foolish thoughts leave us blind.

Often in the midst of suffering or when faced with suffering, you and I tend to be blind to the fact that God may allow suffering in our lives to display his glory and blessing. Here the Lord cuts through our blind confusion about sin and suffering. That man did not endure a life of blindness because he or his parents had sinned. Yes, sin has consequences like pain or hardship, but even then, the Lord uses those "bad things" to reveal his light in our lives. You see, he doesn't punish us as our sins deserve, because he punished Jesus for them once for all. There is no punishment left for us to suffer, so we see the ***"works of God"*** displayed in our lives. Yes, Jesus healed the man, but more importantly, Jesus came to heal the man's spiritual blindness—and ours too.

The man was seeing his friends' faces for the first time. He had to tell them about this miracle that had just taken place. Oddly those who knew him couldn't believe that it was actually him. ***"Isn't this the one who use to sit***

begging?” “No, but he looks like him.” “I’m the man!” The questions of “How?” and “Who?” still needed answers. When the man left for the Pool of Siloam, Jesus had moved on. The man repeated the account of his healing again and again, but didn’t know who this Jesus was who had healed him.

This miracle—a man blind from birth now with perfect vision—seemed so impossible that some of his neighbors hauled him to the Pharisees to get an explanation. The Pharisees were the religious leaders and in a good position to explain such a miracle. Sadly, they proved to be even blinder than this man once was because of their unbelief.

The Pharisees started squabbling over Jesus. **“This [Jesus] is not from God, because he doesn’t keep the Sabbath.” “...How can a sinful man perform such signs?”** By their own man-made laws, they had determined Jesus was a sinner because he had “worked” on the Sabbath, which included making mud out of spit and dirt. By their blind standards, that made Jesus a “sinner,” but how could he heal if he wasn’t from God?

“What do you say about him?” The man hadn’t seen Jesus, but he did know that the one who had healed him could only come from God. By faith, he confessed, **“He’s a prophet.”** This statement only angered the Pharisees more. They summoned his parents to prove he was blind from birth. They tried to get him to declare under oath that Jesus was a sinner, but the man confessed even more boldly, **“Whether or not he’s a sinner, I don’t know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!”**

The Pharisees demanded again that the man explain what happened. He simply responded, **“I already told you and you didn’t listen... You don’t want to become his disciples too, do you?”** As the Pharisees foamed with blind, angry unbelief, God made the man bold with the light of truth. **“This is an amazing thing! ... You don’t know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to him. Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he wouldn’t be able to do anything.”** The Pharisees blindly raged at the man and threw him out of the synagogue.

Unbelievable, isn’t it? Those Pharisees were so self-righteous, so unbelieving that they were completely blind to Christ’s revealing light as they tried to discredit the man’s testimony about Jesus. Yet before we pat ourselves on the back for not being that blind, you and I need to get our own sight checked.

Spiritual blindness comes far more easily than any of us care to admit. How those smug Pharisees were acting seems sadly familiar. Have you ever shown such blind self-righteousness? Have you ever let your sinful nature blind you to the truth of God’s Word? Have you ever been blind with anger because God’s Word revealed to you something you didn’t want to hear or didn’t want to admit? The Light of Christ reveals all the arrogance and unbelief and self-righteousness in our hearts. Before God, we must confess those times when we have been blind Pharisees rejecting the clear truth of his Word.

Yet with undeserved love, the clear, revealing light of Christ shines into your heart and brings healing forgiveness for your blind unbelief and arrogance. The revealing light of God’s Word opens your eyes and moves you to boldly testify to what that Word has to say. Christ opens your eyes to see him.

When Jesus heard what had happened to the man he had healed, he sought the man out to reveal his Light once more. Jesus didn’t return to get the man to say, “I believe in you.” The Lord had already planted faith in his heart, but Jesus returned to help the man clearly see the truth.

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?” Jesus wanted this man to realize that the One who spoke to him was the promised Messiah—the One who had come to rescue mankind from the blindness of sin and unbelief. The man replied, **“Who is he, Sir, that I may believe in him?”** By faith, this man trusted that Jesus would give him the right answer. **“You have seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”** The revealing Light of Christ brought complete healing to this man born blind. He now saw his Savior with his own eyes—the very Savior who had lived perfectly up to that time and who would make his way back to Jerusalem to sacrifice himself for the sins of that man and the Pharisees and everyone else. The man responded, **“I believe, Lord”** and worshiped as a clear-sighted child of God.

Jesus’ final statement seems cryptic, but really explains everything. **“I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind.”** The man born blind now had perfect spiritual vision. By faith, he knew exactly who his Savior was—Jesus Christ, the One who had healed him of his physical ailment and who had healed his sin-blinded soul. Unlike him, however, those who claimed to see without Jesus’ help only showed how blind they really were in unbelief.

From conception, you and I have been spiritually blind, but Jesus reveals his light in our lives to remove our blindness. Jesus gives you perfect spiritual sight focused on what he alone has done for you—living a life free of sin's blindness in your place, allowing his life to be snuffed out to remove your blindness forever, and opening your eyes with the clear light of his resurrection. Jesus gives you spiritual sight, so you can see your Savior.

What does Jesus reveal in you? Yes, his light reveals your natural arrogance and self-righteousness, but his light also gives you 20/20 spiritual vision no matter how good or poor your physical eyesight might be. The Light of the World terrifies the spiritually blind, but shatters the darkness for you and me. With clear sight, fix your eyes on Jesus—the Revealing Light! Amen.