

June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022

John 9:1-25 New International Version Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

**Sermon: Jesus Opening the Eyes of the Blind: The Brokenness of Darkness**

As we continue to look at the stained-glass windows of our sanctuary. Today we turn our attention to the window where Jesus is opening the eyes of the blind, based on the text you just heard, John 9. And if you have one of these little booklets that were published a number of years ago to celebrate those windows, you will know that the chosen text to go with this window was John 9. Now I find that interesting because John 9 is not the only story of Jesus healing a blindman. In Mark 8:32 a blindman was healed when Jesus touched and “spit on his eyes”. In Matthew 20 Jesus heals 2 blindmen with a simple touch. In Luke, a begging blind man was healed with words. While in John, you heard, Jesus mixes his saliva with dirt and puts the mud on the eyes of the blindman, then tells him to wash in the pool water.

So as I studied the window, and I studied the various texts of blindmen being healed, I wanted to share with you my findings which will lead to the conclusion of why I think John’s story of Jesus healing the blind was chosen for us to study as we look upon the beauty of that window.

We’ll start with the Markan text, because scholars believe Mark was the first of the gospels and the shortest. Mark wants the good news of the gospel to get out there as quickly as possible. In fact the gospel starts with these words: **The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God**, and then Mark introduces John the Baptist who prepares the way for Jesus. So no birth narratives, no shepherds or wisemen, Mark just keeps going, getting the stories across of Jesus. In fact Mark 8 shares this: **22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?” 24 He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” 25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, “Don’t even go into the village.” 27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.** Mark doesn’t mess around. Jesus healed the man, warned him not to go the village, and moved on himself. Mark is short and to the point.

When Matthew writes his gospel, we recognize the connection he wants to make between the prophecies of the Messiah and Jesus. So he begins with lineage: **This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...**and so on and so forth. Matthew wants people to see Jesus as the one the Israelites have been waiting and praying for. So when it comes to Jesus healing the two blindmen, notice they make the connection between the Old Testament prophecies and the answer in Jesus. Matthew 20: **29 As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. 30 Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” ... 32 Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. 33 “Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight.” 34 Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.** They call him Son of David, he heals them, and they become disciples of the Messiah, the one they have been waiting for.

In Luke’s gospel, we recognize from the beginning there is going to be more stories. **Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account ...**Despite the fact that Matthew has 28 chapters, and Luke 24, Luke has more words and verses. Because he’s trying to bring home his investigation in an “orderly account” that points to Jesus, pointing to God. So in chapter 18 we read: **35 As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36 When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. 37 They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” 38 He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ... 40 Jesus stopped and**

ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, <sup>41</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, I want to see,” he replied. <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” <sup>43</sup> Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. Jesus didn’t even have to touch him, and the man was healed. And who did he praise? God because in Luke all things are under God’s control.

Moving onto John. He too is writing his gospel to provide some answers. But answers given in a different way. John begins his gospel with, **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** <sup>2</sup> **He was with God in the beginning.** <sup>3</sup> **Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.** <sup>4</sup> **In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind.** John will make a strong correlation between Jesus and God, as being one. The other gospels do too, but John more so, because at the time of his writing, which is the latest of the 4 gospels, people are seeking answers to why follow Jesus? And yes you can read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and learn of how Jesus invites his disciples to change themselves, change their situations with God’s help, but the energy of John is to make one recognize that change come through Jesus, the Word of God made flesh, the light of the world. He has come to take away our brokenness, and help us recognize the incarnation of God that as John the Baptist says in **1:29 “takes away the sin of the world!”** So John is writing about theology, who is our God, and what does God do for us in Jesus Christ? He takes away the sin, the brokenness of the world. And he doesn’t need to be asked because he seeks it, he sees it and does something about it.

You see that is why I believe Pastor Dawes and Rapp chose John 9, because in this story of the blind man being healed the difference is in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the blindmen called out to Jesus for assistance. But in John it begins, **9 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.** Jesus saw him. He sought him out. **The Incarnate God sees the brokenness and offers healing and beauty.** So that *it’s not what the man* or his parents did that caused his blindness, because bad things do occur, but it is *the will of God to fix it.* Which is why Jesus says **“but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”** And he will go on to share that light with that man. Even if the man doesn’t understand it, because in verse 17 he calls Jesus *a prophet* and at the end of the text he says, *Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!*”

John doesn’t want us to focus on that healed man, he wants us to focus on the change Jesus brings. In this text, Jesus is claiming that all that is wrong with the world, God is going to seek out to heal and change through him, the light of the world. God sees your brokenness and in Jesus promises to heal you.

Last year I read the book titled, *Hello Darkness, My Old Friend: How Daring Dreams and Unyielding Friendship Turned One Man’s Blindness Into an Extraordinary Vision for Life.* The book tells the true life experience of Sandford Greenberg who attended Columbia University in the 1960’s and his roommate assigned to him, was Art Garfunkel, of Simon and Garfunkel. Sandy and Art got along well and became fast friends. But during the summer break before Sandy’s Jr year, he loses his eyesight to a disease and falls into a darkness that is overwhelming and hopeless. Sandy believed he would have to give up his dream of finishing college to become a public servant. But Art did not think he needed to. In fact he visited Sandy and convinced him to come back to school and Art became one of Sandy’s readers. He would read aloud Sandy’s text books to him, so Sandy could study and pass the class assignments. Art also became Sandy’s guide, helping him get around campus and New York city. But one afternoon, Greenberg and Garfunkel went to Midtown for an appointment Sandy had. When it was time for Greenberg to go back to campus, Garfunkel said he had an appointment and couldn’t accompany him. Greenberg panicked. They argued, and Garfunkel walked off, leaving Greenberg alone in Grand Central Terminal. Greenberg, bewildered, stumbled through the rush-hour crowd and did what he had to to get the train back to the stop at school. At the gates, someone bumped into him and said “Oops, excuse me, sir.” Greenberg knew the voice. It was Art. “It was one of the most brilliant strategies,” Greenberg says, “Arthur, of course, had been with me the whole way”. Upon reflecting on that experience, Greenberg, who was 78 at the time of this writing, wrote, “A famous prayer in the Jewish religion has taken on new meaning for

me. **“Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us in life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this glorious moment.”**

Friends, to look upon that window, is to see what John wrote, Jesus is the Lord our God, King of the Universe, Light of the world. In him we see the One who has kept us in life, sustained us and enabled us to open our eyes in the darkness, and allow his salvation to lead us to glorious moments.

Let us pray: Holy God, in this holy moment, in this holy place, open our eyes that we may see the freedom in being yours, the freedom and blessings you bring when we live in the power and in the glory of your name through Jesus Christ. Amen.