

Livin' the Life
Sanctity of Life Sunday: Disabilities for the Glory of God, part 13
John 9:1-7
January 21, 2018

We are continuing our series in the Gospel of John, "Livin' the Life" looking at the life of Jesus and seeing that he is the source of eternal life, and gives better purpose and satisfaction for living than anything else. Bottom line, Jesus is better. We are out of order in the text today as we celebrate the Sanctity of Life by looking at the God given value of human life in John 9:1-7. I was once told that one of the reasons a couple left CCC years ago is because they saw abortion as political. But the value of human life is more biblical than political. It is about discipleship. Jesus said in the great commission to "teach them to obey all that I have commanded you (Mat 28:19)." So, I am teaching us to obey all he has commanded us, including valuing human life. And because many Christians have participated in abortions, I am also teaching that the gospel offers forgiveness and the removal of guilt.

"Jesus sees a man blind from birth and his disciples ask him, Rabbi who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind (1-2)?" They want clarification from Jesus because they recognize that Jesus was more than a mere man. As a matter of fact, Jesus had just made the claim that "before Abraham was I am," making a claim to be God (8:58-59). In the disciple's mind there is a direct correlation between some specific sin and his specific suffering, blindness. They want to know whether this man sinned in the womb or parents sinned before his birth, resulting in his blindness. All human suffering, including sickness, disabilities, and death are in the world because of sin (Ro 5:12-14; 8:18-25) but Jesus rejects the explanation that some specific sin caused this suffering.¹ Jesus saw another explanation. Sometimes God in his mysterious and wise providence allows suffering to display God's mercy and power. So, Jesus is not so concerned with the source of the disability but the future purpose of his disability. Look at verse three, "It was not that this man sinned or his parents but so that the works of God might be displayed in him (9:3)."

But Jesus says works, not work showing us that this disability has more than one purpose of God. I heard John Piper say something years ago that has stuck with me. God is always working in a multitude of ways in our circumstances. The next two verses give us this clue. Jesus makes reference to his mission and again uses the I am statement, I am the light of the world (9:4-5). He has a greater goal than the blind and disabled man seeing natural light. He also wants him to see spiritual light, to see the glory of God (1:14). Jesus is the light that the man needs more than physical light. There are many who are blind and see the light of the world and there are many who see who are blind to the light of the world. Jesus wants something better and greater for the man, spiritual eyes and spiritual light.

Jesus addresses his real physical need. And this is how he does it. "He spit on the ground, made some mud, placed it on the man's eyes and told him to go, wash in the pool of Siloam. The man went and washed and came back to Jesus seeing (9:6-7)!" He was healed! But then several arguments break out. First, there is an argument among his neighbors whether this really is the blind man or not (9:8-9). Then there is an argument among the religious leaders whether Jesus is really from God because he healed on the Sabbath (9:13-16). Then there is another argument whether this man has indeed been blind and so they call his parents to testify. And his parents threw him under the bus, telling the religious leaders to ask him because he is of age (9:18-22). So, the Pharisees turn to the man again and demand that he glorify God or come clean. They did not think that Jesus could have healed the blind man because they think he is a sinner and not from God (9:24-25). In the end, the man is cast out of the synagogue (9:34).

Later Jesus finds him and asks, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" And he responds, "who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to

¹ This is not to say that the two are never related. Jesus says that they can be (Jn 5:14) and Paul taught that suffering may be caused by sin (1 Co 11:29-30; 2 Co 12:7) but necessarily so (Gal 4:13)

you.” He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him (9:35-38).” The ultimate healing that this man received and that we all need, is to see the glory of God in Jesus Christ (1:14). His physical healing was for a greater good, his spiritual healing. Now we see the connection between Jesus claiming to be the great I am and this man’s blindness and healing and Jesus as the light of the world. The most important thing for this man is to see the glory of Jesus and worship him. Spiritual healing in salvation is the ultimate healing; it is the greater good. The ultimate reason for this man’s disability is that the works of God might be displayed in him, that he be given natural eyes to see the glory of God’s creation and given spiritual eyes to see the glory of the Creator, Jesus Christ and worship him. Or as John said “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and by believing have life (20:31). Jesus does not just give life, Jesus is life. So, from this story, I understand that God has a purpose in every disability, whatever the reason. God’s purpose in every disability is for his own glory and for the good of his people (Rom 8:28). And therefore, it is wrong for us to see children in the womb with a disability as unimportant and unwanted or without a God given value. And it is wrong to take their life. Every child, even those with disabilities, have been shaped by God (Ps 139:13-15) with a God given purpose.

What about all those who are not healed? None of us are ever fully healed in this life. All healings are a foretaste of perfection in the New Creation. And when God does not heal the majority of people with disabilities, he has a wise and greater good purpose. The works of God may be the grace to endure suffering in faith as an example for others. When God withholds grace in one way, he always provides grace in another (2 Co 12:7-10). Or maybe their disability is the platform in which God works in the lives of others. Or maybe the work of God may be in those who selflessly serve those with disabilities. Even dying with a disability is meant to display the work of God (Jn 21:18- 19). You can live with disabilities to the glory of God, with thanksgiving and worship and joy, and you can die with disabilities to the glory of God, with thanksgiving, and worship and joy.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. Why did John write his gospel?
2. How is Jesus better, more satisfying?
3. What should be done if you do not feel that Jesus is better or more satisfying?
4. Is abortion and the sanctity of human life primarily a political or moral issue?
5. How is abortion related to discipleship?
6. Have you ever heard it taught that our sin is directly related to our suffering, sickness, etc?
7. Is this a true and biblical statement?
8. Can this teaching have a detrimental impact on the Christian life?
9. Why is Jesus so controversial?
10. Practically, how do we glorify God in life and death?
11. How do we glorify life in disabilities and suffering?
12. How has God impacted your life from your own suffering or the suffering of others?

