

## Gospel lesson

We move on several chapters in the Gospel of John to a time just after Jesus nearly was stoned at the temple for saying "before Abraham was, I am." I want you to note that when the text says "Jews" in this Gospel, it typically refers to the leadership of the temple that rejected Jesus as Messiah.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gnpi-061-jesus-blind-man/>;  
credit: Good News Productions International and College Press Publishing

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**John 9:1-41**

NRSV

<sup>1</sup>As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

<sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.

<sup>4</sup>We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

<sup>5</sup>As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

<sup>6</sup>When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes,

<sup>7</sup> saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

<sup>8</sup> The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?"

<sup>9</sup> Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."

<sup>10</sup> But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

<sup>11</sup> He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight."

<sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

<sup>14</sup> Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.

<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

<sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others

said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided.

<sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

<sup>18</sup> The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight

<sup>19</sup> and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

<sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

<sup>21</sup> but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."

<sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

<sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

<sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."

<sup>25</sup> He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

<sup>26</sup> They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

<sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

<sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

<sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.

<sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.

<sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.

<sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

<sup>34</sup> They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

<sup>36</sup> He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."

<sup>38</sup> He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.

<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."

<sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?"

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

*The Word of God for the people of God*

<Children's/Interactive time>

What kinds of messes do babies make?

<Let them respond>

Are babies held responsible for the messes they make?

<Let them respond>

When are people held responsible for the messes they make? <Let them respond>

So until babies grow enough to:

- have motor control to do things intentionally,
  - understand what good behavior is, and
  - be able to clean up after themselves,
- it is kind of pointless to expect them to fix the messes they make.

Who, then, cleans up after them? <Let them respond>

Parents/caregivers who love the babies clean up after them until they are ready to do so for themselves.

When children get older, will the parents/caregivers still help them with their messes? What about the child's behavior may affect that? <Let them respond>

What about sinners being held accountable for sins? When is appropriate to expect them to fix the messes they make by sinning? <Let them respond>

So until sinners grow to know God enough to:

- have conscience to do things intentionally,
  - understand what the difference between good and evil is, and
  - be able to make amends after they sin,
- it is kind of pointless to expect them to fix the problems they make.

Who, then, cleans up after them? <Let them respond>

God shows us tremendous grace as we grow and learn what is good versus what is sin. As we grow in faith, there is expectation that we will behave better, showing love for God and for one another.

What do you think may affect God's response after we sin? <Let them respond>

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May we always remain humble before God, willing to let the Holy Spirit open the eyes of our souls, and grateful for the grace of Jesus enabling it.

<Hymn "Open Our Eyes">

TFWS #2086>

## Message: Companion for the Journey



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/renewed-in-mercy/fourth-sunday-in-lent-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/fourth-sunday-in-lent-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Healing Shepherd who guides us through life, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may journey in Your grace and teach others of Your love through what we say and do. Amen.

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We are "Journeying in Grace" today as we continue our Lenten series:

"This year, the lectionary once again gives us a very familiar text. Whether read at a baptism, wedding, or funeral, Psalm 23 has accompanied many

of us through important moments in our lives.”

We just read Psalm 23 the day before yesterday, in celebrating the life of Bill Bowers Sr. He was humble and helpful in his work serving this farming region, a man of good heart. Apparently so was the traditional author of Psalm 23, David.

Saul was king over Israel at the time of our Old Testament reading, but he rejected God's instructions about not taking spoils of war from the Amalekites. His heart was on material gain instead of serving God, so God decided to replace him.

David was the eighth and youngest son of a wealthy man. He did not really lack anything; he was able to spend time learning to play the lyre well. He was not expected to be a leader of people; he was left tending sheep while the more important men in his family went to the sacrifice by the visiting head priest.

It is ironic that those who went to worship with Samuel apparently did not have their hearts set on God, and that their faith guide was blind to this. At least Samuel kept asking God for information rather than making assumptions about the person before him. That is more than the leaders arguing with Jesus did in today's Gospel reading.

In the prior chapter, Jesus tried to tell them who He was, and they rejected what He said, calling Him a demon and getting ready to stone Him. They were blind to the truth, for it made no sense to them according to normal life - and they did not ask God in the

moment for guidance about Jesus. They assumed they knew, just as everyone assumed they knew the truth about the man blind from birth.

In those days, if someone had a problem, the assumption was it was because they – or possibly their parents – had sinned, and God was punishing them. There was no concept of God using their suffering to help the world in transactional faith relationships. They were blinded by sin from seeing the kind of relationships God wants with us, where love endures.

Jesus made the point vividly. The blind man received the gift of sight because he followed the Lord's instructions. On the day people were supposed rest and give thanks to God, the blind man was released from the struggle of blindness and he gave thanks to Jesus.

The synagogue leaders (who were supposed to be resting also) got busy investigating what had happened. They saw that a miracle had occurred, but could not bring themselves to admit that Jesus had told the truth.

It's like the reason why Arabs are classified "white" in the US census data: in 1915, a US judge could not bring himself to rule that Jesus was not white, so people from that region are classified white.<sup>1</sup>

Playing along with the judge's prejudice (and thus endorsing sin), Arabs were spared some of the discrimination put upon minorities/ people of color.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.lwv.org/blog/representing-middle-eastern-and-north-african-citizens-census;](https://www.lwv.org/blog/representing-middle-eastern-and-north-african-citizens-census)  
[https://www.reddit.com/r/23andme/comments/wvylph/why\\_are\\_arabs\\_considered\\_white\\_in\\_the\\_us\\_census/#:~:te  
xt=It's%20because%20white%20Americans%20had,have%20got%20to%20be%20white.](https://www.reddit.com/r/23andme/comments/wvylph/why_are_arabs_considered_white_in_the_us_census/#:~:text=It's%20because%20white%20Americans%20had,have%20got%20to%20be%20white.)

However, that has led to problems today because there is no data tracking for their minority situation.

The man born blind did not play along with the synagogue leaders' prejudice; he refused to lie. Although that was harder at the time because he was driven out by them, he got to see Jesus more clearly, to know who He was, and his faith became stronger.

Paul exhorted the Ephesians to "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness" but rather to "Live as children of light." We know that Jesus shines light into the darkness, exposing the truth; therefore, we should seek for everyone to understand the truth of what is good and what is not.

If we think of our entire life as a journey, we know that we will grow in faith and learn how to show love for God and one another. To do that, we need to have God's guidance.

- ✦ So rather than judging others, leave that to God (who knows their entire situation).
- ✦ Connect with God in as many ways as you can, e.g., prayer, study of scripture, worship, walks in nature. Ask for God's guidance in all situations.
- ✦ Consider where we can show love instead of hate or fear. Where have we ostracized someone? How can we be inclusive instead?

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In this way, we grow personally in healthier ways and

we build Christian community through the grace of God.  
May all of our lives be spent journeying in grace with  
our Lord.