

## **“God Displays His Works”**

**John 9:1-41**

**Fourth Sunday in Lent + March 19, 2023**

**Dear Friends,**

**When a new baby is expected, you might hear the parents or grandparents say, “We don’t care if it’s a boy or a girl, just so it’s healthy.” But what if the child is not healthy? Or what if there is something that is not right with the child? When children are born we look them over top to bottom, front and back, to see if they have all their fingers and toes and make sure everything is all right. But what if something is missing? What if something is not right? We love them anyway, don’t we. With God’s help we care for them and seek to help them reach their full potential.**

**Another thing that happens in those situations is that people ask why? Why did this happen to our child? We know in a general way why bad things happen to people: it is because of sin and the curse of death brought on by human sin. We know that we are all mortal and that our bodies will die, and it is only natural that parts of our body and mind may experience corruption and disease and dysfunction while we walk this life. But we still want to know why. Why this particular problem for this particular family? Jesus’ disciples thought they had the answer: out-of-the-ordinary troubles must have been caused by out-of-the-ordinary sin. The disciples saw a blind man known to have been blind from birth. They asked Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (v.2). Jesus’ answer gives us something to think about, no matter the condition of our eyes or any other part of our body: “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him” (v.3). The Evangelist John, writing by the Holy Spirit, spends a whole chapter telling us of the works of God in this man. Let us take a look at them and see how God is likewise working in us, no matter how perfect or imperfect our bodies may be. They are the works of (1) Creation, (2) Conversion, and (3) Confession.**

**— I —**

**The first work of God that we see is the work of Creation. Christ creates for this man the ability to see. “Having said these things, he spat on the ground**

and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing" (vv..6-7). Why did Jesus choose this method of healing? To be sure, He could have simply spoken the word and the man would have been able to see. After all, when God brought everything into being He simply said, "Let there be...." and there it all was. But consider that when the Creator made human beings, He took an even more personal approach. With His own hands He formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. The very air that came from the mouth of the Lord gave life to the cold clay of the earth. Now, the Creator of all things is walking the earth. Remember, without the Son of God, Jesus, the Word of God, nothing was made that was made. What better way to create the ability to see for this poor man than to use spit from His own mouth, make mud from the earth, and then take the mud and spread it on the man's eyes.

God is our Creator, as well, dear friends. The psalmist says we are fearfully and wonderfully made; God's works in the human body are marvelous (Psalm 139). What the human eye can do is stupendous. The work of the Creator is displayed in us. Consider even when something with a child is not right. Remember when the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush? God told Moses that he was sending Moses to Egypt to bring God's people Israel out of Egypt. Moses was looking for an excuse so that he wouldn't have to do it. One of his excuses had to do with one of his limitations. He complained that he was "slow of speech and of tongue" (Exodus 4:10). Do you remember how the Lord answered? He said, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak" (Exodus 4:11). How much more should we praise God the Creator when our children are healthy and strong. How much more should we praise Him for all the advances that have improved our physical health and well-being. It was God, was it not, who created man's reason that has allowed these advances. It was God who has so ordered creation that we may work with so many resources and use them for the healing arts. Creation is God's work!

Secondly, there is the work of Conversion. We know that by nature a person is spiritually blind, unable to see Christ as his Savior and believe on Him. Jesus speaks of this when He says, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind” (v.38). This young man came to see Jesus by faith. As the hymn says, “I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.” The Pharisees, on the other hand, thought that they could see everything. They thought that they were all-wise and that nothing was hidden from their eyes. But the coming of Jesus turned so many of them more stubbornly against God than ever. Their own rebellion blinded them to the mercy and grace of God that was offered them.

This reminds me of a phrase in Ephesians Chapter One, where Paul prays that the Christians at Ephesus would have the “eyes of [their] hearts” enlightened to the many spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus. Think of that: you have “eyes” in your heart. In our natural condition, the ruin with which our sinful nature has caused us to be born, we are not able to see Christ as our Savior; we are unable to grasp the fact that He has rescued us from our sins.

It was this blind unbelief that moved the Pharisees into even more hostile opposition to Jesus. It was this blindness that caused the Jewish authorities to have Jesus condemned and crucified. But with eyes of faith we can see God’s purpose in Jesus’ death: we “see” and understand, “That was for me! Jesus died to remove my guilt. Jesus rose again from the dead that I may have eternal life.” Paul, writing by God’s Spirit, discusses this in 2 Corinthians Chapter 4. First, he describes this fallen condition as blindness. He says that in the case of “those who are perishing ... the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (vv. 3-4). Minds that are blind—that is the work that sin and devil have worked in us. But then, He speaks of the gift of faith—what we call conversion—in the same terms used of God’s creative work in making everything out of nothing, simply with His word. He says: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (v.6). When God

said, “Let there be light!” and there was light, what a miracle that was! It was accomplished simply by His word! And that is the same miracle that His word has accomplished in you. No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. The fact that you are here today confessing Jesus as Your Lord is evidence that God has miraculously made something out of nothing in your heart. You were dead in sins but now are alive in Christ. Conversion is the second work of God displayed in the blind man—and He still displays it today.

— III —

That brings us to one more work of God displayed in the life of this young man: the work of confession. The formerly blind man is willing to confess Christ to others, even in the face of hostile opposition. Not only have the eyes in his head been enlightened, not only have the eyes in his heart been opened, but now his mouth is also opened to confess Christ before others. As it says elsewhere, with the heart we believe and with the mouth we confess. The man’s own parents are afraid to speak of Jesus and what He did for their Son—you would have thought they would be the first to tell of the works of God. They merely confirm to the Pharisees that, yes, this was their son who had been born blind and that, yes, now he is able to see. But if you want to find out how it happened, you need to talk to him directly. It tells us plainly that they reason they said it this way was because they were afraid of being excommunicated, kicked out of the synagogue and shunned by the others in the worshiping community. The son on the other hand, is bold to testify about Jesus before this hostile audience: “He is a prophet” he tells them. He also says, “Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing” (vv.32-33). He spoke up for Jesus so confidently that they did excommunicate him from the worshiping community. That’s when Jesus went and found Him and the man confessed the name of Jesus and worshiped him.

This boldness does not come from human strength. It is the conviction of God the Holy Spirit in a person’s heart that results in this kind of speaking of salvation, even when those listening are hostile to Christ. May God, through His word, work that kind of confession in us, as well!