

**John 9:1-7, 13-17,34-39**

**Lent 4; March 19 & 20, 2023**

It's a natural question to ask. *"Why does God allow some people to be born disabled or handicapped? Why does a good God allow accidents to happen that may cause a disability or handicap later on in life to happen? If God is good and all powerful, why does he allow bad things to happen to people?"* As Jesus was walking along the road one day with his disciples, they asked Jesus that simple question. **"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"** I suppose in a way it was a fair question. Why was this affliction allowed to happen? Did he or his parents do something to deserve this? Did they fail to do something that caused God to let this happen?

We get that question, don't we? On one side there is the assurance from God himself in the Bible that he is a God of love. He loves his people. He loved them so much that he came into this world to suffer and die a death that we can't possibly fully understand. Yet, he is a just God and expects that his people are perfect and holy. He is a God who promises that the **"wages of sin is death."** (Romans 6:23) Both of those truths are true. So, how do we resolve these two things? So, whether you have asked that question out loud or not, I think that most of us have asked that question in our minds. Have you ever asked that question about yourself? *"What have I done to deserve this?"* *Is God punishing me?* Like the disciples, we have had to wrestle with this question ourselves.

Jesus acknowledges that it is a fair question. Therefore, he is going to answer the question. **"Neither this man nor his parents sinned,"** said Jesus, **"but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."** Then Jesus tells this man to do something that really doesn't seem to make sense. **"After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent")."** Yet, he listens to Jesus. He goes and he does. Suddenly, he can see the world in a way that he had never seen before. He could now see the birds that he could only have ever heard. He could see the faces of people that he could only have imagined. He could see color. He could see the clouds in the blue sky. For the first time in his life, he could see life in this world. Suddenly, he could see the way to his home that he previously only could feel. We can only imagine the joy this man saw as Jesus had given him sight.

Then the story takes a surprising turn. The man born blind was healed. Yet, for the religious leaders of that day, a different kind of blindness was revealed. The Pharisees were completely opposed to see Jesus as the promised Messiah. They went and dragged this man to come before the Pharisees and they tried to get this man to deny who the miracle that Jesus had done. **"Therefore, the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So, they were divided. Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."** They tried everything to try to get this man to deny that he had been healed by Jesus. They tried to discredit Jesus himself. The blindness that the Pharisees were showing was more dangerous than the blindness that this man had experienced his whole entire life up to this point in time. The blindness of faith can only lead to one place. It is not a good place.

What happens if this story would take a different turn? How would you feel if you were that man in our text, and you weren't healed of your blindness? Would we see the bigger picture that God could still use us, if he didn't change anything in our life? How would we feel if God didn't take away this man's blindness? Would the works of God still be displayed in him? To see how that might be displayed in him, let us take a look at a man named, Nick Vujicic. He was born without any limbs – no arms and no legs. Let watch a short clip about him. (video)

There is a comfort that we can also take from John chapter 9. Even if God doesn't make things go in our life the way we want, he is still working out his plan in us. Jesus wanted this man to see that he had come to do something in this world than to just give physical sight to a blind man. Jesus wanted him to see the spiritual blindness that he removes from the hearts of people. **"Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him."**

Later on, the Apostle Paul wrote these words. "I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."** (2 Cor. 12:7-8). We don't know what that thorn was for Paul, but we do know that he knew God's grace. We may not always know the "why" of something in our life. May we join the hymn writer in saying:

**Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind but now I see.**

**Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.**

Amen.