

John 9:1-7;13-17;34-39

Lent 3A

As you are vacuuming the living room, you notice something on the carpet that leads you to ask yourself if you should test out how powerful your new vacuum cleaner is, or if you should just do the easy thing and bend over to pick it up. No brainer. You test the power of the vacuum cleaner, and sure enough, the larger-than-usual-but-still-little object is gone. Then, about 15-30 seconds later, the vacuum shuts off. It must be one of two things, right? Either the bag, which hasn't been emptied for some time, is full, or the object you just tried to suck up made the vacuum cleaner stop. Once you check the bag and find out that it isn't quite full yet, then you've ruled out one problem, and feel pretty confident it must be that something got stuck. After turning the vacuum upside down and taking a look, you don't see anything stuck anywhere. You're left stumped and frustrated. So you take a break and head around the corner to the other room for a bit. Of course, just as you turn the corner, what do you see? You look down and see that the cord came unplugged from the outlet. "*Duh*," you think to yourself. You were so certain that it was one of two things that caused the problem, that you completely overlooked that there might be third solution.

I wonder if the disciples had such a "*duh*" moment in our text this morning. Perhaps, they were trying to figure out the cause of this man's blindness. They had it narrowed down to one of two possibilities: *either the man himself was guilty of some specific sin or it was the sin of his parents that caused his blindness*. Their line of reasoning followed what was the common perception of the day: physical challenges such as blindness were considered to have come as a result of past sins. Either way, they were feeling pretty good about one of those two possibilities being the cause – *either the man's sin or his parents'*, and to determine who was at fault, they turned to Jesus.

And what they found was an entirely different possibility all together. **"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."** They turned to see around the corner and saw that the cord had come unplugged from the outlet when Jesus responded. It was a possibility they hadn't even entertained. As it turned out, discovering the ROOT CAUSE of his blindness should not have been their focus, but rather determining WHAT PURPOSE his blindness would serve. In this case, Jesus tells us exactly WHY this man had been born blind. In a few short moments, when suddenly that man who had not seen the light of day for his entire life, suddenly had his eyes opened, it also became clear to the disciples. His blindness served a *different purpose* all together. It wasn't about a WRONG that had been committed in the past, but rather about how God intended to use it for GOOD in the present and the future.

We need to remind ourselves and one another of this possibility more often, don't we? We can slip into the same faulty reasoning the disciples did, thinking that it must be because of some past transgression. Jesus' point was that not only is that not the case, but that we sometimes may be overlooking another possibility altogether: that God may be desiring to put his works on display.

Think about that answer of Jesus. **"This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."** That is not the way we usually think of WHY something happens in our lives. We know this world is tainted by sin. We see it all over. We also see it in our own lives. What do you see when you look at yourself in the mirror? Do you see someone who has failed at things in your life? Do you see an uncertain job as a blessing? Do you see someone who hasn't always kept all the promises that you made? Are you happy for sin in your life?

Sin brings suffering. Sin has taken this perfect world that God created and turned it into something that is ugly at times. All you have to look at is this Coronavirus outbreak in this world. We live in a world that is broken by sin. Who would have ever seen that a virus could bring this world to a stop? Who would have ever thought that people would fight over toilet paper? As we look around, we can be tempted to think the same way that the disciples did. *Who sinned?*

Please don't misunderstand me. It doesn't mean the God causes sin. But he can make use of this opportunity to let the **"works of God be displayed."** When you watch the news coverage about this outbreak, what do you see? You can see the ugly side of people, right? Then comes the story on the news that I saw yesterday about an elderly couple in Oregon who were too afraid to leave their car and walk into the store. Then along comes a total stranger in the parking lot to ask how she could help them. They asked her if she could do their grocery shopping, because they were afraid of coming

into contact with so many people in the store. She said *“sure.”* She did and loaded up their groceries, and gave them their change, and the story went viral. In fact, I even had one of our members contact me yesterday to offer the same help to anyone who might need it. **“but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”**

I’m going to guess that when this man woke up in the morning, he never thought he was going to see the Son of God do such a miracle to him. He never imagined that God would use his blindness to display **“the works of God.”** This man was going to SEE Jesus being the **“Light of the world.”** Can you imagine how that man felt when he heard those words? He was blind, but now he restored by God. Not only had Jesus restored his physical sight, but he opened his eyes to see Jesus as HIS Savior. God does the same thing for us. We believe, therefore we see who Jesus truly is. This Jesus, whose death we will celebrate in a few weeks, goes to the cross to rescue you. I wish we knew more about what happened to this man after this account, but God didn’t share that with us. Instead, in this text, we get to see God not only displaying his work in this man. But we also see God working through this man.

Now, like the blind man, let us recognize that God’s desire is not only to put his works on display to us, but also through us. We’ve already been set apart for salvation. We already believe. God has already worked his gift of saving faith in our hearts. So why are we still here? It’s not so that God can somehow save us more than we’ve already been saved. Heaven is already ours. From the moment he made you his, he has kept you here on earth for the purpose of putting his work on display through you. Allow God’s gifts of forgiveness and salvation to free us from our selfish indifference to countless others who remain spiritually blind, and put God’s those gifts of forgiveness and salvation on display for others to see and hear. Tell them about the One who made you see, so that one day, they might share the same confession as the blind man and each of us: *“Lord, I believe.”* Amen.