

“What Do You See?”

John 9:1-41

March 22, 2020

Tragedy can strike very quickly and without notice. While going about our everyday lives, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, the world can change. As a nation we have been living with this reality since September 11, 2001. About 3000 people were killed that day and the financial trade center for 150 nations was destroyed. Then there are natural disasters. We've lived through the most powerful Tsunami in our history that took the lives of 230,000 people in Indonesia and other countries in 2004. We've lived through Hurricane Katrina, which flooded over 80% of New Orleans. We've experienced floods in our state, and earthquakes and tornadoes across our country. We have seen bombings, killings, and war in Afghanistan and Iraq for years. And now we are dealing with the COVID-19 virus and the uncertainty it has brought to our everyday lives. I used to think that only once in every lifetime, something would happen in our world that would shape the course of human events. Whether it was a war, a special invention, or an act of nature, every generation would always have one event that they could point to that shaped their lives. However, over the past 18-19 years it seems like we have lived a lifetime.

Just imagine the millions of people around our world whose lives are being interrupted or are changing from another once in a lifetime event. Whenever we face these situations we often ask, “Why does God allow such awful things to happen?” Jesus disciples asked Him that same question about 2000 years ago. They met a man one day who had been born blind. He was poor and lived his life as a beggar. Now in those days most people believed that all suffering was the result of sin, so the disciples asked Jesus in verse 2, “Teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

What's interesting with this question is that if one believes that the man sinned and is responsible for his being born blind, that means somehow he sinned before he was born. He must have sinned in his mother's womb, and oddly enough there were people in those days who believed that; but notice with the disciples' question they do not express any interest in helping him. Upon seeing this man, all the disciples want to do is discuss his situation with Jesus: “Who sinned?” But when Jesus sees him He sees something to do. He takes some dust from the ground, moistens it with saliva, and puts it on the man's eyes. Jesus then sends the man to wash in the pool of Siloam and he comes back being able to see. Neighbors are amazed. Some of them cannot believe it. So they ask him how this happened and he says that the man called Jesus healed him.

The Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, hear about this and they are furious, because not only are they suspicious of everything Jesus did, but it was the fact that Jesus did the healing, which was considered work, on the Sabbath – a blatant violation of their strict religious rules that said there was to be no work done on the Sabbath.

So the Pharisees interrogate the man's parents and on two separate occasions interrogate the man who was healed. After asking the man all kinds of questions, the man finally says in verse 25, “I don't know all of the rules of religion, but one thing I do know, I was blind, and this man, Jesus, put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see.” The Pharisees knew that Jesus hadn't done anything wrong, but they certainly did not want to admit it for fear of losing their power and influence over the people. So they do what anyone does when they feel insecure or frustrated: they turn to force and throw the healed man out of the temple.

Jesus hears about the man getting thrown out of the temple and He comes to find him in order to offer him love, comfort, reassurance, and hope. Jesus comes to help, and that's great news for us today. When we are hurting or in trouble or experiencing a pandemic, Jesus always comes to help. This blind man is touched by Jesus and as a result, not only is he able to physically see, but spiritually his heart opens, He is filled with hope for the first time in his life as he sees Jesus as His Savior, and worships Him.

So the question for us is: “What do we see?” Do we see this world with the eyes of Christ and wonder what we can do for others or do we see this world with the eyes of the Pharisees and wonder what can we do for ourselves? The point of this story is not about physical sight, but about spiritual sight; and I guarantee when we look at this world with the eyes of Christ, 3 things happen:

First, it changes the way we see ourselves. The fact is we are all born blind – blinded by our selfishness. I think we are seeing this take place as people rush to grocery stores to load up on supplies or even hoard supplies for themselves. But when we have the eyes of Christ, we change from, “I'm going to do something for myself”

to “Let me do something for others.” With the eyes of Christ, we move from selfish vision to service vision. I know many of you have that service vision as you have cared for your neighbors and have called and emailed the church last week wanting to know what you can do to help others during these uncertain times.

When we look at the world with the eyes of Christ, it will change the way we see ourselves, and secondly, it will change the way we see others. Instead of asking, “Why did God allow this to happen?” looking at the world with the eyes of Christ will cause us to ask, “What can I do to help others?” We need to see everyone around us as members of God’s family, regardless of how they treat us, and we need to embrace them, help them, and treat them with love.

Finally, when we see the world with the eyes of Christ, it changes the way we see God. When we put all of the crises and difficulties of life into perspective and see them in view of the cross, we realize that not only did Jesus die for our sins, but Jesus also paid the punishment for our sins. Therefore, anything we go through in our lives, including this COVID-19 virus, is not a punishment for our sin. Jesus did away with that on the cross. However, that doesn’t mean if we willfully sin or do things that can harm us that there will not be consequences for our actions. For example, if I smoke 5 packs of cigarettes/day for 20 years and then develop lung cancer, I should not blame the disease on God. I ought to blame myself. If I spoil my child and never offer any discipline, and years later my child is very selfish and demanding, I should not blame God. I should blame myself. God warned us in His Word that we will reap what we sow.

The challenge, though, comes when we reap what we have not sown. Why does a person who was doing everything possible to avoid the coronavirus still get it and die? Why was the man born blind? Back at the beginning of creation, these problems were non-existent. At that time there was no sickness, death, hate, or tragedy. The world was perfect, but then sin entered this world through Adam and Eve and it destroyed God’s perfect world. In the wake of sin came disease, death, and humankind’s inhumanity towards others.

If God won’t promise us freedom from sickness, hate, and tragedy, what does He promise? He promises that He will not allow more to be put on us than we, with His help, can bear. He promises that nothing in all of creation will ever be able to separate us from His love. And He promises that if we give Him all of our heartaches and sorrows, He will use them for His purposes for something good. The man born blind in our text clearly shows us that the more time we spend with Jesus, the clearer we will see God – not as one who punishes, but as one who loves and gives hope.

Today and over the next several weeks many people will say, “We don’t know what the future holds.” But, actually, we do. We don’t know all of the twists and turns in the road, but we know where the road ends – safely and victoriously in the holy, loving, healing, forgiving arms of Jesus. See that, believe it, and share it with others.