

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent  
March 15, 2020  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
**The Work of God Displayed in Our Lives**

**John 9:1–7 (NIV84)**

*As he went 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> “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. <sup>4</sup> As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” <sup>6</sup> Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. <sup>7</sup> “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.*

*<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. <sup>15</sup> 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.” <sup>16</sup> 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 do such miraculous signs?” So they were divided. <sup>17</sup> Finally they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.”*

*<sup>34</sup> To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out. <sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” <sup>36</sup> “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” <sup>38</sup> Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”*

Dear Friends in Christ,

A Christian athlete wins the championship game or sets an Olympic record in their event. The reporter catches them seconds after the win and the athlete says something like, “I give all glory to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” This athlete is being a witness for Christ to a national or international audience. This athlete is connecting Jesus with success and great accomplishment. It is certainly good that Christian athletes give thanks to the Lord. But what about the Christian athlete who drops the baton in the relay race? What does the Christian athlete who missed the free throws at the end of the game say? How about the athlete who has to be carted off the field due to injury? Do you hear the same, “I give all glory to Christ” when an athlete suffers a loss? I suppose it probably happens but not as often or at least, it is not as reported.

The devil, the world and our own sinful nature attempt to put blinders on us as Christians so that we see success in life equated with Jesus being with us and suffering in life as Jesus not being with us. These blinders make us think that when things go well, it is because God is pleased with us. But when things go poorly, it is because God is punishing us. These blinders try to keep us from being a witness for Christ when we are suffering setbacks in life and instead only testify about Christ when our life is perfect. Jesus himself removes these blinders of false beliefs from us today. He heals a man of physical blindness, removes his spiritual blindness and this man becomes a witness of Christ to others. The work

of God is displayed in his life. The work of God is displayed in our lives as well. First for us and then through us to others.

### **First For Us**

*As he went 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?”*

He had never seen a sunset, never gazed on a field of wildflowers, never looked at his mother’s face. He was blind from birth. He could not see, had never seen and had no hope of seeing in the future. But he could hear. And what he heard was not encouraging. The disciples of Jesus, men who should have been compassionate and kind, wonder aloud about the cause of this man’s blindness. And they only give two options. Either the blind man sinned to cause his blindness or his parents sinned. The only option the disciples could imagine was that God was punishing this man or his parents for some terrible sin. Surely, the disciples were not the only ones to think and say such things in this man’s presence. He could certainly hear their condemning question. Later, the Pharisees say it more bluntly. *“You were steeped in sin at birth.”*

This man could hear what others thought of his situation from birth. They thought he was under God’s judgment for some sin. But he probably didn’t need to listen to the suppositions of strangers. It is likely that those same thoughts were already in his own head. Why am I blind when almost everyone else can see? Why am I resigned to a life of begging and depending on others when others can work and be productive members of society? Why must I sit in the street as an object of pity when others have the dignity of providing for themselves? What did I do to deserve this life?

If these exact thoughts did not run through the blind man’s mind, I know that similar thoughts run through our minds. When trouble and problems and suffering comes to us, we put on blinders and only ask, “What did I do to deserve this?” In the case of the man born blind, Jesus gives a clear answer.

*“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”*

How many times had this blind man heard the voices of people who wondered what terrible sin he had committed? How many times had he heard the whispers of “It’s just so sad.” How many times had his own thoughts condemned himself? And now a new voice speaks clearly in his hearing. This voice is unlike any other voice. It is a voice that does not condemn. It is a voice that does not create doubt or pity. The voice of Jesus takes away doubt and gives hope to the man born blind.

This man is not being punished for some particular sin. His blindness is not a curse from God upon this man. What wonderful news for him and for us when we suffer. This sickness, this disaster, this surgery, this accident, this big problem is not a punishment sent from God because of my sin. The blind man heard Jesus’ words and would get to see Jesus face to face after Jesus gave him sight. But we know the rest of the story. We know what Jesus did to pay for the sins of the world. God’s wrath and punishment due for sin was poured out on Christ on the cross. All the punishment for all the sins of the world, including yours and mine, was taken by Christ. Listen to the voice of Jesus and look to the cross of Christ and trust that God is not punishing you for your sins when you suffer. Your sins are forgiven in Jesus.

But what about when it is our fault that we suffer? We fail the exam because we did not study. We lose a job because we were not reliable. We get into an accident because we were driving recklessly. Maybe we understand that the blind man did nothing sinful to be born blind. But what about when we do something sinful and are suffering the consequences? It is true that this is a slightly different situation. However, the answer is still the same. Jesus suffered in your place. Jesus took all the punishment for all of your

sins. Repent and believe the voice of Jesus who came to give his life as a ransom for you. Repent and look to the cross and see that the full payment has been made. Yes, we may suffer consequences for our sins but God is not punishing us. God is not angry with us. Through Christ, we are freely and completely forgiven.

### **Through Us For Others**

Jesus said that *“this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”*

Then Jesus *“spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. <sup>7</sup> “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.”*

This man was given sight for the first time in his life. The Pharisees investigated and tried to prove that this was a hoax but could not. And throughout the investigation, the man who had been blind was able to give clear testimony about who healed him, coming to the conclusion that Jesus is a prophet. He gave glory to God for this miracle and pointed the Pharisees and others to Jesus. The work of God was displayed in his life. Others would know of Jesus through him.

Do you need to be miraculously healed in order to be a witness of Christ in your life? No. The only miracle you need is the miracle of faith. The Holy Spirit brought you from spiritual blindness to sight, from death to spiritual life, from unbelief to faith in Christ. We hear the voice of Jesus in the Bible and therefore Jesus can display the work of God in our lives even without a miraculous healing.

It may be that the work of God is best displayed in our lives during times of struggle and suffering. When the world is in panic mode, believers have a firm foundation in Christ. Viruses do not need to panic us for our Savior has overcome death by his resurrection. No virus can take us from Jesus. Financial fluctuations in the world markets do not need to make us fear. Our future is not in the bank or stock market. Christ has guaranteed our future by his death and resurrection. Our future is heaven. Personal tragedy and loss does not need to worry us. For Christ does not leave us during trouble. He does not abandon his own whom he purchased with his own blood. When we are able to display trust in Christ during struggle and suffering, we are able to display the work of God in our lives. This is a wonderful witness to others.

And when we don’t show that confidence in Christ, he does what he did for the man who had been blind. The Pharisees berated him and threw him out of the synagogue. This was basically excommunication. This man who had depended on the kindness of fellow Jews to survive while he was blind was now on his own with no support from the synagogue. Jesus won’t abandon him now.

*Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” <sup>36</sup> “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” <sup>38</sup> Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.*

Jesus continues to come to us in Word and Sacrament to forgive our sins, strengthen our faith and give us hope for eternal life. At times, life might look like the athlete crossing the finish line in first place. Other times, we trip and don’t even finish. But the work of God is displayed in our lives as we listen to the voice of Jesus and look to his cross in every situation.

Amen.