**Light of the World**

Based on [John 9:1-41](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn9.1-41)

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Fourth Sunday in Lent

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Today’s gospel is a progressive narrative about the work of God in Jesus Christ. It begins with Jesus announcing that he is the light of the world as he heals a man born blind. This starts a controversy among the Jews: is Jesus from God, if so why did he heal on the Sabbath? Is Jesus a sinner, if so how can he heal a man born blind? They despise Christ and try to pressure the healed man to say that Jesus is a sinner. He refuses to slander Jesus and so, they cast him out of the synagogue. Jesus, after hearing the man has been cast out comes to him again and tells him that he is the messiah. The healed man believes and worships Jesus. Jesus concludes by teaching that those who accept him truly see, while those who reject him are truly blind.

There is no middle ground. Jesus is the light of the world and will not put away his light so men can dwell in darkness. Neither will Satan allow men to walk comfortably in the light. Jesus says elsewhere, “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword, dividing families.” Jesus is a stumbling block, a scandal. You either love him or you hate him; you either worship him, or you blaspheme him. Either way, he remains the light of the world and his purpose is to shine before men so that they may see him, believe in him and have salvation in his name. He is the light and the light exposes both what is true and what is false; who is of God and who is of the devil.

Jesus’ disciples begin by asking why the man was born blind. They assume it was because he or his parents sinned. And certainly they did, but Jesus says that’s not why he was born blind. He was born blind, Jesus says, **“that the works of God might be displayed in him.”** This is a very comforting teaching. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; and all diseases and infirmities are on account of living in a sinful world. But not all diseases and infirmities are the result of particular sins. Consider Job, who was a righteous man, meaning he believed in God and worshipped Him above all things. And yet God allowed Job to suffer at the hands of the devil so that Job’s faith could be tried and seen before men. And despite suffering swift and brutal assaults, Job did not curse God. Job’s faith prevailed; the devil’s plot failed and God was glorified. And he restored Jobs fortune in the double.

So too this man was born blind. So too we as the children of God suffer sicknesses and infirmities in this world. God allows this not to tempt us to deny him; but to test our faith…not so we fail, but so that by turning to him we are not put to shame. Rather, that our faith may prevail before the world, giving glory to God.

Jesus heals the man born blind in order to teach that he is the light of the world. And the blind man, in his body becomes a living miracle of God to stand before the world. He is a light of Christ. His parents, his neighbors, the Pharisees and even he himself now have to grapple with one simple fact, plain to the sight of everyone. He once was blind, but now he sees. How can this be? How can a man who was born blind now have sight? They ask the man and he answers, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.” So I went and washed and received my sight.”

The simple fact is undeniable, incontrovertible, plain to every eye. This man was born blind, Jesus came to him, and now he can see. This is the fact, but the real issue for the rest of the episode is one of doctrine. Yes Jesus healed him, but who is Jesus? Who is Jesus?

The body of the narrative is the Jews and the man grappling with the doctrinal question who is Jesus? He is a healer, a miracle worker, yes, of course the man can see, but is he from God? So his neighbors summon the Pharisees, the religious authorities, to try and answer this question. But the Jews had already agreed that if anyone were to confess Jesus to be the Christ, he was to be put out of the Synagogue. Excommunicated.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is how God works faith in the world, by making the world confess the doctrine of Christ. That Jesus healed a man born blind, fact. Not even the Pharisees dispute this. But is he the Christ? This question leads to disagreement and division. And the blind man is pressured by the Pharisees to take a side. And he makes a simple deduction. A man born blind can only be healed by God. He was born blind and healed by Jesus. Therefore Jesus must be from God. He confesses this much and the Pharisees excommunicate him.

A chapter before, Jesus had already declared that the Jews who oppose him were of their Father, the devil. He said, “If God were your father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.”

This is the truth, those who reject Jesus and pressure others to do so are of the devil. And the devil is a liar and twister of God’s word. And this is clear in the argument of the Pharisees. They say that Jesus is a sinner because he worked a miracle on the Sabbath. But they lie, by twisting God’s word. Certainly the Sabbath was to be observed, and had Jesus broken the Sabbath, he would have been a sinner, and certainly could not bee the innocent lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But it was not a violation of the Sabbath to do the work of God. The Pharisees knew this, but they didn’t care. They had an agenda to discredit Jesus, and they twist God’s word in order to reject the light and remain in the darkness.

St. Paul writes in the epistle, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.” Jesus exposes their blindness. He is the light and that’s what light does. That’s why, in the end, the Jews plot to snuff out the light, and murder Christ on the cross…because as long as he is in the world, their deeds are exposed for what they are, and they prefer to remain righteous in their own eyes. They do this by remaining blind.

In order for those who wish to do what’s right in their own eyes to consider themselves righteous and sinless, they must remain blind. More than that, they must see to it that those around them remain blind. Isn’t it interesting how important it is to these Jews and Pharisees that this healed man deny Jesus who healed him? Why are they so intent to get him on their side and say he is of the devil. Because Jesus just made that man born blind a walking light of Jesus.

The man who was healed because of Jesus,, was cast out because of Jesus. Jesus is a scandal, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, but to those being saved he is the power and wisdom of God. This power and wisdom is not seen by the world but is shrouded in the persecution, suffering, and death of Christ at the hands of sinful men.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ faces opposition, but our faith is established and God is glorified when we confess who Jesus is despite opposition. For though we lose all things, we have everything when we gain Christ and abide in him.