

**The Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 22, 2020**

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**The Works of God: Sight to the Blind**

John 9:1–41

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Eph 1:2*


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**Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Having said these things, He spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then He anointed the man’s eyes with the mud and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing (vv 3–7).**

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Like being blind, that’s how it feels right now. Despite the constant stream of reports and news from around the world, we’re living in the dark. We can’t even see each other. You can’t see me in the pulpit, and I can’t see you in the pews, as we normally would. How I miss that! We’re socially isolated and distanced. We’re at the mercy of things we can’t see and forces we can’t control. Our senses don’t provide any protection against this virus—not even the sense of sight on which we are so dependent.

But this isn’t a problem for our Lord.

## 3.

Jesus sees. He sees not only our world with its chaos, confusion, and uncertainty. Not only the virus, its spreads, and the death toll it leaves behind. Jesus sees a man. A single blind man. That’s how John 9 begins: **As Jesus passed by, He saw a man blind from birth** (v 1). You or I might have walked right past that man without seeing. God knows we’ve done that so many times, to our shame. Often it’s hard for us to see a person. That’s why the fact that Jesus sees is so striking. This man doesn’t escape His notice. *No* man, woman, or child escapes His notice. He sees you, too, in your darkness and isolation.

The disciples see the blind man as well, but they see him so differently than Jesus does. They don’t—they can’t see how **the works of God might be displayed in him** (v 3). We struggle with this, too. We struggle to see—even to see by faith—that God can display

His works through individual deformities, illnesses, and trials. What do the disciples see displayed in the man born blind? Not the works of God, but maybe the works of the devil or the fall or sin. For them, the man is a theological issue, not a soul in need of care. **“Rabbi,”** they ask Jesus, **“who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”** (v 2).

“Neither.”

**“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him”** (v 3).

Not what we expect to hear! What do the works of God have to do with a man born blind? How can God’s works be displayed in him? And do Jesus’ words apply in any way to our own time and situation?

But He’s not done. Jesus says, **“We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”** (vv 4–5). The works of God are the works Jesus does. The Father sent His Son into the world not to condemn the world but to save it. Truly, Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

And Jesus includes the disciples and the Church in these works. **We must work the works of Him who sent Me** (v 4). In some way, the Church continues in the works Jesus was sent to do. Though the night has come, the night of His crucifixion and dying, we live now in the Day of His resurrection. And He does His works while it is still day. His light shines. And are not His works and His light needed so desperately at this time? Dear Christian, we do not have the cure for coronavirus. We have something even better: the comfort, the hope, and the promise that death’s reign ended with Christ! Jesus is the light of the world, and we can brighten the darkness by lifting high His cross and by singing of His amazing grace!

## 2.

Jesus displays the works of God in the man born blind, but in a way that seems far more earthy and gritty than spiritual. **He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” So he went and washed and came back seeing** (vv 6–7). It’s all so physical. Out of dust and spit, He makes mud, and then from the mud He makes a healing salve, and then He sends the muddy-eyed blind man into the water with a word . . . and now he sees!

This miracle is the work of God, though the Pharisees have their doubts. After all, it was on the Sabbath that Jesus made mud and put it on the blind man's eyes and healed him. But the blind man makes a pretty compelling case for Jesus: **“We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing”** (vv 31–33).

Throughout John 9, the question of who sinned and who works the works of God keep coming up, especially with Jesus. Was this healing on the Sabbath a sin or was it the work of God? Is Jesus a sinner or not? And if He's not a sinner, than just what or who is He?

The works of God are displayed not only in this blind man seeing, but even more in this blind man seeing Jesus. Just consider what happens to this blind man throughout our reading. First, he confesses what **the man called Jesus** did—how He made mud, anointed his eyes, and sent him to wash in the Pool of Siloam, where he received his sight (v 11). He sees Jesus as a remarkable man. Later, however, when asked again, the man who was blind says of Jesus, **“He is a prophet”** (v 17). Later still, he speaks the words in which he declares that Jesus is **from God** (v 33). Finally, when Jesus found him, he confessed his faith in the Son of Man, saying, **“Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped Jesus** (v 38).

Is not this the work of God? And so the works of God are displayed in the man who was blind when he believes in Jesus. His *sees* now, truly sees, for the first time, who Jesus is—not just with physical eyes but by faith. I would also add this: this man's life doesn't get easier as he comes to see who Jesus truly is. In many ways, it becomes more difficult. He is mocked, insulted, and finally cast out.

### 1.

Jesus, too, is willing to be mocked, insulted, cast out, and even die to do such work. In fact, by dying He will do even greater things than these. He takes our blindness and our sin, including our callous disregard for others, and condenses it into His death, and then He will rise to create new life.

And we glimpse this much greater story in John 9. With a word and water, the blind man's eyes are opened. So also for you. With the word joined to the water of Holy Baptism, your eyes were opened. You were given faith to see Jesus. Baptized into His death and resurrection, you are children of God. You are now dead to sin and alive to

God in Jesus Christ. You are no longer enslaved to fear, anxiety, or death, **but now you are light in the Lord** (Eph 5:8).

Now, through us, the works of God are displayed in a world that is blind, isolated, and at the mercy of things they can't see. But we know Him, and we see Him, and through us, He can open their eyes, too.

THE WORKS OF GOD ARE THESE:  
TO GIVE SIGHT TO THE SPIRITUALLY BLIND  
THAT THEY MIGHT SEE JESUS, WHO SEES THEM.

What does this mean for our time? Are the works of God able to be displayed in you, as they were in the blind man? Can they be displayed even through sickness, trials, and death?

Yes!

We can't see what tomorrow will bring, but we look **to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God** (Heb 12:2). We may live in the dark about what the next week or the two weeks will bring, but all the while we live in the light of eternity. Let the light shine before others, that they may see Jesus.

**For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face** (1 Cor 13:12).

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The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

*Phil 4:7*

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