

WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. After a meal, they enjoyed a fire and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes woke up and nudged his faithful friend. “Watson, look up and tell me what you see.” Watson replied, “I see millions and millions of stars.” Holmes then asked, “What does that tell you?” Watson thought for a minute. “Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all-powerful and that we’re small and insignificant. And meteorologically, I suspect that we’ll have a beautiful day tomorrow. Why, what does it tell you?” Holmes replied, “Watson you idiot, it tells me that someone has stolen our tent.”

Sometimes it’s hard to see something that is right in front of you. For some reason it doesn’t connect. Ask the Pharisees at Jesus’ time. Jesus was right in front of them and it should have been obvious to them that he was the promised Messiah. Yet they refused to see him for whom he truly was. This was a blindness they actually had from birth, a blindness, sad to say, most of them had their entire lives. My friends, that’s a blindness we all were born with, a blindness we would still have if it weren’t for the grace of God. It’s only by the grace of God that we can say with joy in our hearts. **Was blind but now I see.**

What a horrible handicap to be blind! Not to be able to see that beautiful white snow we once again had this week, the flowers blooming in springtime, the smiling faces of your spouse, children or grandchildren, the blue sky, the stars at night, the beautiful streams of water, the grandeur of the mountains and we could go on and on. Being able to see is a gracious gift from God that I’m afraid we often take for granted. At Jesus’ time, blindness was especially horrible. There was no chance of getting a job; no government programs to assist them; having to beg for money to survive. Even worse, there was a feeling of guilt because many people believed that a blind person or his parents must have committed a horrible sin that God was punishing him for. Waking up every morning was not something a blind person looked forward to.

This was the case for the blind man in our text. One day, morning came and someone took him to the temple so he could once again beg for money. Little did he know that something was going to happen to him that would completely change his life. That something was Jesus. Jesus saw this blind man and had compassion on him. Jesus made a little mud pack using his own saliva and put it on the man’s eyes. He then told him to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash the mud off. When the man did, he opened his eyes. To his amazement, he could see. Can you imagine the excitement he had? To see the faces of people, to see what food looked like, the different colors, the blue sky. He was blind but now he could see.

Was everyone excited and happy for this man? No! The Pharisees who were the religious leaders of the day didn’t believe that Jesus was the Promised Messiah. In their blindness, they refused to believe what was happening right in front of them. All Jesus’ miracles proved he was the Promised Messiah including this one but they refused to see that. When they asked the man how he had been healed, he told them Jesus did it. How did they react to that news? **How could this man be of God because he healed him on the Sabbath?** They thought it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath and that is all they saw. When they questioned the man further and he told them that Jesus was a prophet and from God, in their blindness, they got so mad they kicked him out of church. They said he was no longer welcome to worship there.

What a day this was for this blind man! He started the day off begging for money. Jesus entered his life and healed him of his blindness. He was so excited, he couldn’t stop talking about it. He told the truth to the Pharisees and was banished from church. Talk about highs and lows. Then, once again, Jesus entered the picture. **Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.” Then the man said, “Lord, I**

believe,” and he worshiped him. Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” Here is the real and greatest miracle in this account. This man became a believer in Jesus. In contrast to the spiritually blind Pharisees, the eyes of this man’s soul were opened wide and he saw Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. Jesus said that is why he came into the world. To give sight to the spiritually blind but also to make even more blind those who think they know everything, are better than everyone and keep rejecting the truth of God’s Word again and again.

Do you see how this man’s story is really our story? Our eyes on our faces may have been working fine when we were born, but the eyes of our souls were blind. That was our birth defect, a heart problem that every single person has. Dan and Laura Schultz were blessed with a beautiful baby girl this past week and Johnny and Becky King had a baby boy. As beautiful and cuddly and sweet as these babies are, they have a heart disease, the disease of sin. This disease is fatal. Like everyone else born into this world, they have the sentence of damnation in hell hanging over her head. I’m not saying this to be cruel or to deflate their balloons of joy and happiness. I know the parents and the grandmas and grandpas don’t want to hear this on such a happy time in their lives but it’s true. All of us were helpless and hopeless.

That is until God stepped into the picture with the gift of his Son Jesus.

That’s why Jesus had to become one of us. He was born as true man but he did not have a birth defect. He did not have a heart disease. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. That is why he could live and had to live a perfect life in our place. He also had to take the punishment for our imperfections, the punishment of death on the cross and the pain of hell while on that cross. The blessings he won for us come to us through God’s means of grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. When these new little babies are baptized, their eyes of faith will be open to who Christ is, the one who came to take their sins away. For most of us, our eyes too were opened at our Baptisms. For some of us, it may have been when we were adults. Regardless of the time, through Word and Sacrament, Jesus has opened up a whole new world to you. With eyes of faith, you can see that Jesus is the Lamb of God who has taken all your sins away. With eyes of faith, you can see that God has fully and freely and completely forgiven you. With eyes of faith you can see that your heavenly Father will always be with you and will take care of and protect you. With eyes of faith you can see that you are guaranteed eternal life in heaven. With eyes of faith you can say, “Was blind but now I see,” all because of the grace of God.

My friends, let me give you this warning though. We hear a lot about the grace of God, his undeserved love for sinners like you and me. We say we know we don’t deserve God’s love but sometimes I wonder if it’s because that’s what we are supposed to say. The Pharisee in us that we were born with still has a problem with this. Isn’t it amazing that we live in a selfish world where we want to get as much as we can, whenever we can and as free as we can? We love free stuff. Yet, when it comes down to the most important aspects of our life here on earth, and that is forgiveness and eternal life in heaven, we have a problem with God just giving them to us as free gifts. “How can they be free? We have to help. We have to earn it. Yeah, I know the Bible tells me I don’t deserve them but (and there comes that but again) I think I kind of deserve it. After all, look what a good and faithful Christian I am.” Spiritual blindness likes to take our eyes off Jesus and focuses on ourselves. Lord, forgive us for such arrogance and blindness and help us to keep in front of our eyes the Law that shows us our sin as well as the Gospel that shows us our Savior from sin.

There’s a story of a blind man who was on his deathbed. The man had been born blind but that didn’t stop him from serving the Lord. He was very active in his church, always giving, never asking for anything in return. Everyone loved this old man. One day the pastor of the church came to pray and to talk with him. The pastor when he approached the man’s bedside said, “Everything’s going to be fine.” The old man responded, “I know everything’s going to be fine. I’m not worried at all. Matter of fact, I’m really happy right now.” This kind of surprised the pastor. Here was a man on his death bed and he was reassuring the pastor that everything was going to be all right. On top of that, the dying man said that he was happy.

After that exchange, both he and the pastor were quiet for a moment. Then the old man spoke up. He said, "Pastor you know why I'm happy right now?" Just think, I'm lying here about to die. When I die, I'll close my eyes for the last time. Then the next time I open them, I'll be able to see. The first person I'll see will be Jesus."

My friends, even though this man could not see, he had the best and most important eyesight in life. He could see very clearly who Jesus was and the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross to win his forgiveness. He could see very clearly the life that was waiting for him. God in his grace had given his once blind eyes sight. The miracle before us this morning reminds us of that truth. Not only did Jesus miraculously restore this man's physical sight, he also made it possible for him to see Jesus as the Promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. He has done the same to us. We once were blind but now we see. We see Jesus as he truly is with our eyes of faith. One day, we will see him as true God and true man with our very own eyes as we enjoy our eternity with him in heaven. My friends, there is no doubt about it. God's grace is truly amazing. Thanks be to God! Amen.