

Text: John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39

Theme: Amazing Grace - I Was Blind, But Now I See

Date: March 19, 2023 (Lent 4A)

In the Name of Jesus, who gives spiritual sight to the blind, Dear Christian friends,

What color is it?

I would like to ask your cooperation today as we begin our study of God's Word. I would like to ask you to close your eyes and think of a dandelion flower. Now, answer to yourself this question – what color is the dandelion flower? Keep your eyes closed. Now, think about the most beautiful sunset you can remember. What color was the sky? Ok, now open your eyes. If you were born blind like the man in our Bible reading for today you could smell the dandelion and you could feel the warmth of the setting sun on your face, but you would not be able to answer my questions, would you?

The blessing of sight!

Can you imagine then how happy the man in our Bible story was when Jesus opened his eyes? He saw everything for the first time. He saw the dandelions and the sunsets, and so much more. Physical eyesight is a such blessing from our Creator God that it would be almost impossible to imagine what life would be like if one would lose their eyesight. Yet we know that there are people who are either born blind or lose their eyesight for some reason, such as injury or illness. Daily we can be thankful that God has given us the blessing of our eyesight to praise him for the beauties of his created world. Yet as wonderful as our physical eyesight might be, there is an even greater sight blessing that God gives to us. It is the blessing of our spiritual sight. While it is a tragedy when someone loses their eyesight, it is an even greater tragedy when someone either loses their spiritual sight or remains spiritually blind their entire life.

Spiritual Blindness

Spiritual blindness is real. It's as real as physical blindness. The symptoms of spiritual blindness are just as real as physical blindness.

- Those who are spiritually blind cannot see Jesus Christ as he truly is, the Son of God.
- Those who are spiritually blind cannot believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.
- Those who are spiritually blind cannot trust that Jesus made the payment for all their sins.

Today, Jesus teaches us why he healed a man of his physical blindness and his spiritual blindness. As we listen to the words of our Savior, may we ever more appreciate the fact that while we were once spiritually blind, now, by God's amazing grace, we spiritually see Jesus.

1. I Was Blind...

Jesus healed the blind man

Jesus didn't have to tell the man in our story for today that he was blind. He knew it. He had been blind from birth and Jesus miraculously healed him by placing some mud on his eyes and telling him to wash it off in the pool of Siloam. This man wasn't blind because of some accident. Nor was he blind because of some sin that he or his parents had committed. He was simply suffering from the effects of sin in this world. And it became clear from the words of our text that God had allowed this physical blindness to happen so that Jesus might glorify God by a miracle. And that's exactly what happened. Jesus miraculously healed this man by giving him his sight. That miracle glorified his Father in heaven. Jesus said: **THIS HAPPENED SO THAT THE WORK OF GOD MIGHT BE DISPLAYED IN HIS LIFE.**

Many questions followed the miracle of sight

Of course, such a wonderful thing wouldn't go by unnoticed. People wondered about this miracle and went to the religious leaders to get some answers. "*What are we to make of this thing that just happened?*" seems to be the sentiment of many who witnessed the miracle.

- In their doubt and unbelief, some questioned whether this man really was blind from birth. Maybe he was faking it.
- When that failed to be the case, these people then questioned the healer, the one who had performed the miracle of healing on the Sabbath day. According to the rigid Jewish interpretation of the Law, it was unlawful to perform any act of work on the Sabbath day. This Jesus, this miracle worker, couldn't therefore be from God, for no real believer works on the Sabbath.
- Still others made the point that such a healing couldn't be done by an ordinary sinner, so it must be from God. So back and forth they argued.
- Finally, they turned to the healed man himself. "*What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.*" This man knew he was born blind. This man knew he was healed. He knew something was different about Jesus, for he was the only one who had healed him. So, he said "*He is a prophet.*" That's all he knew about Jesus at this time, so that's what he told them. He believed he was healed of his blindness. Now he could see.

The spiritual blindness of the Pharisees

But the Pharisees continued in their own stubborn blindness. Oh, not their physical blindness, but their spiritual blindness. The evidence that Jesus was someone special was right in front of them. Evidence about Jesus had been piling up for months. Miracle after miracle showed that Jesus was more than just a regular guy, but still these Pharisees refused to believe. They refused to see. They were set in their ways, set in their spiritual blindness.

The birth defect of spiritual blindness

Why couldn't they see Jesus for who he was? Or for that matter, why can't the world around us see Jesus for who he is? Much of our world is spiritually blind. Much of the world refuses to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, even though Jesus did amazing miracles: miracles of healing, helping and raising the dead. Such spiritual blindness is caused by a serious birth defect. You and I and every single person are born into the world with this birth defect. It's called spiritual blindness. That's why the Pharisees

were being so stubborn. And that's why people are still so stubborn today. Have you ever wondered, "Why doesn't that person believe? Can't that person see what Jesus Christ has done?" The answer is no. That person can't see because he or she is spiritually blind.

Spiritual blindness can't see Jesus as Savior

In their blindness some people, perhaps even most people, believe that they can see the way to eternal salvation by themselves. They mistakenly believe that they can save themselves because they have tried hard to please others and do good things. They believe they can save themselves because they have done enough good deeds to make up for their bad deeds and in doing so, they believe that in this way God will accept them into heaven. **By nature, we are no different.** When we were physically born into this world, we knew nothing about Jesus and his cross, we were dead in sin, and we were blind to the only way of salvation. We were physically born with the inability to see spiritual things, the inability to see that Jesus Christ is God and Savior.

Only Jesus can give the gift of sight: physical and spiritual

Even the blind man, after his physical eyes were healed, didn't see Jesus with spiritual "eyes" of faith right away. But Jesus changed all that. One might think that giving this blind man his sight was a great miracle and that would be true. But an even greater miracle was done when Jesus gave this man his spiritual sight. First Jesus opened his eyes so that he could see. Then Jesus opens the eyes of his heart so that he can believe.

Dear friends, do you realize what a miracle it is that you believe in Jesus as your Savior? Surely, you were born just as dead in your sins, just as blind to God's plan of salvation, as the man in our text or the Pharisees of Jesus' day. You were born thinking that bad was good and good was bad. You were born rebellious and sinful and ignorant to God's ways. You were born thinking that you could get to heaven by yourself by just doing a few good works or by just being "pretty good." If you grew up without God's Word in your life, you may have heard who Jesus was, but you didn't give him much more than a passing glance. For all practical purposes, you and I were born spiritually blind...but God's amazing grace took me and took you so that now we see!

2. ... but now I see!

Spiritual sight – what a blessing!

What a miracle! In the words of our text Jesus explains: I HAVE COME INTO THE WORLD SO THAT THE BLIND WILL SEE. Jesus wanted this man to see, not only to see physically, but more than that, to see spiritually, to see Jesus. Jesus opened his eyes to see and his heart to believe. For many of you, that miracle of spiritual sight began in your mother's or father's arms when they brought you to the baptismal font. There God's Spirit put faith in your heart and washed your sins away in the waters of baptism. It's hard to imagine that such simple water connected with God's Word could open blind eyes, even at such a tender young age. But God's promise in the Bible is clear, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the forgiveness of your sins. This promise is for you and your children" (Acts 2:39).

The spiritual eyes of faith believe in Jesus!

Then you were taught the Word. The Words of the Bible are the Words of God, the words of Jesus, just as the words that were spoken to the blind man were the words of God. The Word of God has the power to do miracles. It has the power to create and strengthen faith in the hearts of people. The Apostle Paul said to the Romans, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ." If you are a believer in Jesus as the only Savior from sin and hell, then Jesus did a miracle in your heart. He opened the eyes of your heart to not only see him as your Savior but to trust in him as your Savior. Maybe you cannot remember the day that miracle happened to you, and maybe you can. If this miracle of faith began with your infant baptism, you may never remember a day when you did not believe in Jesus. If you were brought to faith in Jesus later in life, you may well remember what it was like not to know Jesus nor believe in him.

The miracle of spiritual sight!

When asked if miracles still happen today, one Christian responded by saying, "Yes, miracles happen all the time. We just can't always see them." This may be true most of the time, but just maybe occasionally God does allow us to see a miracle. Several years ago, an elderly lady lost her husband and came to live with her daughter and son-in-law. While this elderly lady had relatively good health, she was plagued with a birth defect her entire life. She was spiritually blind. She had no faith in Jesus as her Savior. While this elderly lady had been unchurched her whole life, her daughter and son-in-law were believers in Jesus and made God's Word a regular part of their life. They raised their children, her grandchildren, in the light of God's Word making weekly worship a high family priority. This daughter repeatedly invited her elderly mother to come to church with her for some 15 years or so. But this elderly lady remained spiritual blind and refused every invitation. Over the course of time, this elderly lady's great grandchildren would make it a weekly habit to stop by the house and share their Christ Light Bible stories with great grandma. She always politely listened to her great grandchildren, but without any apparent impact on her heart. At some point along the way, the daughter of this elderly lady was hospitalized for a minor illness. When she had recovered and returned home, the daughter told her elderly mother that her pastor had visited her in the hospital, shared God's Word with her, and prayed with her. The daughter didn't think any more about that brief conversation until one day when her elderly mother was hospitalized. It was then that this elderly lady asked her daughter, "**Do you think your pastor would come and visit me like he visited you?**" And that's exactly what happened. A new relationship had begun between the pastor and this elderly lady. Fast forward a few years and we find this elderly lady sitting in the lobby area of her nursing home surrounded by many of the other residents. This once spiritually blind lady had now requested to be baptized in the lobby of her nursing home with family and friends rejoicing with her because she who once was spiritually blind, now saw Jesus as her only Savior from sin and hell.

Do miracles still happen? I believe they do all the time. I believe that only Jesus can give spiritual sight to those who are spiritually blind. And I believe that one day, by God's amazing grace, I will see my grandmother in heaven with Jesus. I once was blind, but now I see – God's amazing grace at work in me. Amen.