

¹ As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man *blind from birth*. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, *who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*” ³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was *born blind* so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is **DAY**; *night* is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the **LIGHT** of the world.” ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, ⁷ saying to him, “Go, wash in **THE POOL OF SILOAM**” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back *able to see*. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰ But they kept asking him, “Then how were *your eyes opened?*” ¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to **SILOAM** and wash.’ Then I went and washed and *received my sight.*” ¹² They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had *formerly been blind*. ¹⁴ Now *it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.* ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had *received his sight*. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and *now I see.*” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he *does not observe the sabbath.*” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. ¹⁷ So they said again to the *blind man*, “What do you say about him? It was *your eyes he opened.*” He said, “He is a prophet.”

Language Notes & Textual Connections

The text is filled with beautiful imagery and metaphor. Pay attention to the uses of the words and expressions related to *sight (vision)* and *blindness (the lack of vision)*.

who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? : Despite the theological affirmation of the book of Job, which speaks against this direct causal relationship between sin and sickness people continued to blame sickness upon a person’s behavior. In the case of a child born with an affliction this was a bit more complicated. Exodus 20:5 offer a principle that seemed to be a theological solution – “I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me..” This is the theological question underneath the whole story.

DAY; night: This wordplay of day and night, light and darkness, sight and blindness all harken back to John 1:1-14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the **LIGHT OF ALL PEOPLE**. ⁵ The **LIGHT** shines in the *darkness*, and the *darkness* did not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the **LIGHT**, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the **LIGHT**, but he came to testify to the **LIGHT**. ⁹ **THE TRUE LIGHT**, which **ENLIGHTENS EVERYONE**, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who ...

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been *blind* and had *received his sight* until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was *born blind*? How then does *he now see*?” ²⁰ His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was *born blind*; ²¹ but we do not know how it is that now *he sees*, nor do we know *who opened his eyes*. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been *blind*, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵ He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶ They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he *open your eyes*?” ²⁷ He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰ The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and *yet he opened my eyes*. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² *Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind*. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴ They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “*You have seen him*, and the one speaking with you is

...received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and *we have seen his glory*, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

Jesus is portrayed as operating in the day and the light. Only evil actions happen at night such as in John 13: 27-30 “After [Judas] received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And *it was night*.

THE POOL OF SILOAM: This was a pool that collected water from the nearby Gihon brought into the city via a canal. It was a place of purification used in water ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles, a Jewish holiday held in the fall to celebrate the gathering of the harvest as well as the Jewish exodus from Egypt.

The Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem was used for ritual cleansing and purification. Because the pool was near the Jewish Temple, its water was also used for a special ceremony during the Feast of Tabernacles. Every morning during that joyful feast, a priest would take a golden vessel to the pool, fill it with water, and bring it back to the altar amid the shouts of the people.

Then, as the crowd chanted the Hallel – a special prayer from the Book of Psalms– that priest poured out the water on the west side of the altar, and another priest poured a drink offering of wine on the east side of the altar. This ritual was probably to illustrate Isaiah 12:3, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

he.”³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him.³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.”⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?”⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- **What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in the text?**
- **This story is filled with contrasts and reversals. What are they?**
- **What are the people in the story looking for: the blind man? His parents? The pharisees? Jesus?**
- **Imagine yourself in the story. With whom do you most identify? Why? How?**
- **How is the Spirit of God inviting you to *flourishing* faith today in our time of division over the pandemic, politics and racial reckoning through this text?**

The scene of this story connects it with John 7:37-39 in which “On the last day of the festival [of Tabernacles], the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me,³⁸ and let the one who believes in me drink. As[k] the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”³⁹ Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Here the blind man alone see that Jesus is the one who gives living water to drink.

a sabbath day :: this was a day of rest and spiritual contemplation. The only of the 10 commandments that has two different explanations. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your anyone in your household (family, servant or animal) (to remember that God rested on the 7th day of creation).— Exodus 20:8-11
In Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (sabbath rest is commanded in order to remember God’s delivery of the people from slavery in Egypt). The understanding of what was work and what wasn’t was expanded by the Rabbis and included kneading. This is what Jesus does to the mud. Work can be done in order to save a human or animal life that was in danger. And it would have been understood that for blindness Jesus could have waited until after the sabbath to heal.

³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” :: this paradoxical theme is repeated in John’s gospel. Compare it John 12:37-43. “After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.³⁷ Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him.³⁸ This was to fulfill the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

“Lord, who has believed our message,
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

³⁹ And so they could not believe, because Isaiah also said,

⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart,
so that they might not look with their eyes,

and understand with their heart and turn—
and I would heal them.”

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke about him.⁴² Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;⁴³ for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.”