

SCRIPTURE READING FOR FEBRUARY 27, 2022 @ CAPC OAKLAND

John 9:1-41
COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

¹ As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was **BLIND** from birth. ² Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who *sinned* so that he was born **BLIND**, this man or his parents?"

³ Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in him. ⁴ While it's **daytime**, we must do the works of him who sent me. **Night** is coming when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the **light of the world.**" ⁶ After he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man's eyes. ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (this word means sent). So the man went away and washed. When he returned, he could see.

⁸ The man's neighbors and those who used to see him when he was a beggar said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

⁹ Some said, "It is," and others said, "No, it's someone who looks like him."

But the man said, "Yes, it's me!"

¹⁰ So they asked him, "How are you now able to see?"

¹¹ He answered, "The man they call Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes, and said, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and then I could see."

¹² They asked, "Where is this man?"

He replied, "I don't know."

¹³ Then they led the man who had been born **BLIND** to the Pharisees. ¹⁴ Now Jesus made the mud and smeared it on the man's eyes on a *Sabbath* day. ¹⁵ So Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.

The man told them, "He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see."

¹⁶ Some Pharisees said, "This man isn't from God, because he breaks the *Sabbath* law."

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The gospel of John one of the four stories of the good news of Jesus (Gospel means good news) which tells his life, actions, words and mission. It's believed that John's account is the last one written as his retelling of the story reflects considerable theological reflection and uses metaphors and poetic language. One example is the play with light and darkness throughout the story. John's account also contains only seven miracles – or *signs* as they're called. A symbolic number in Jewish tradition that represents the divine and also recall the days of creation in the foundational story of Genesis. In this way the John tells the life of Jesus as the recreation of the world.

sin:: ἁμαρτωλός (hamartōlos) the word literally means "to forfeit by missing the mark". Or "to lose due to falling short of what God approves i.e. what is "wide of the mark". In that way to sin, or do wrong, is to fall short of doing what God would have us do (the good). Sin has a connotation of forfeiting the good, losing out on communion with God – who is the good. This led people to think that those who were not "perfect" – in terms of their body, their emotions or their heritage were sinners. The consequences of them falling short of what God wants. In that line of thinking one could wonder (as the disciples do in verse 2) if the man is blind because of his sin or of a sin that his parents committed. Sickness then becomes viewed as a sort of punishment, or negative sign of social stature.

Daytime | Night | Light of the World

– the words of Jesus harken back to the prologue in John 1 – and also to the coming of the Night – when he's betrayed in John 13:30 ³⁰ So when Judas took the bread [from Jesus which was the sign of who would betray Jesus], he left immediately. And it was **night**.

Others said, “How can a *sinner* do miraculous *signs* like these?” So they were divided. ¹⁷ Some of the Pharisees questioned the man who had been born BLIND again: “What do you have to say about him, since he healed your eyes?”

He replied, “He’s a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jewish leaders didn’t believe the man had been BLIND and received his sight until they called for his parents.

¹⁹ The Jewish leaders asked them, “Is this your son? Are you saying he was born BLIND? How can he now see?”

²⁰ His parents answered, “We know he is our son. We know he was born BLIND. ²¹ But we don’t know how he now sees, and we don’t know who healed his eyes. Ask him. He’s old enough to speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they feared the Jewish authorities. This is because the Jewish authorities had already decided that whoever confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue. ²³ That’s why his parents said, “He’s old enough. Ask him.”

²⁴ Therefore, they called a second time for the man who had been born BLIND and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know this man is a *sinner*.”

²⁵ The man answered, “I don’t know whether he’s a *sinner*. Here’s what I do know: I was BLIND and now I see.”

²⁶ They questioned him: “What did he do to you? How did he heal your eyes?”

²⁷ He replied, “I already told you, and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?”

²⁸ They insulted him: “You are his disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but we don’t know where this man is from.”

³⁰ The man answered, “This is incredible! You don’t know where he is from, yet he healed my eyes! ³¹ We know that God doesn’t listen to *sinners*.

³ What came into being

⁴ through the Word was life, and the life was the **light** for all people.

⁵ The **light** shines in the **darkness**, and the **darkness** doesn’t extinguish the **light**.

⁶ A man named John was sent from God. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning the **light**, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. ⁸ He himself wasn’t the **light**, but his mission was to testify concerning the **light**.

⁹ The **true light** that shines on all people was coming into the world.

¹⁰ The **light** was in the world, and the world came into being through the **light**, but the world didn’t recognize the **light**.

¹¹ The **light** came to his own people, and his own people didn’t welcome him.

¹² But those who did welcome him, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God’s children,

¹³ born not from blood nor from human desire or passion, but born from God.

John 1:3-13

the Sabbath:: The sabbath (the 7th day from Friday at sunset to Saturday at Sunset) was to be a day of rest and worship according to the 7th commandment as recorded in Deuteronomy 5:12-15. “¹² Keep *the Sabbath day* and treat it as holy, exactly as the Lord your God commanded: ¹³ Six days you may work and do all your tasks, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a *Sabbath* to the Lord your God. Don’t do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your oxen or donkeys or any of your animals, or the immigrant who is living among you—so that your male and female servants can rest just like you. ¹⁵ Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, but the Lord your God brought you out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. That’s why the Lord your God commands you to keep *the Sabbath day*.”

To help understand the limits of the sabbath regulation to not work, the religious teachers (rabbis) had developed exact definitions of what was work and what wasn’t. These are related in the Mishna – subsequent writings that are intended to flesh out the grey areas that aren’t defined in the Torah

God listens to anyone who is devout and does God's will.³² No one has ever heard of a healing of the eyes of someone born BLIND.³³ If this man wasn't from God, he couldn't do this."

³⁴ They responded, "You were born completely in sin! How is it that you dare to teach us?"
Then **THEY EXPELLED HIM**.

³⁵ Jesus heard they had expelled the man born BLIND. Finding him, Jesus said, "Do you believe in the Human One?"

³⁶ He answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."

³⁷ Jesus said, "You have seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you."

³⁸ The man said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped Jesus.

³⁹ Jesus said, "I have come into the world to exercise judgment so that those who don't see can see and those who see will become BLIND."

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, "Surely we aren't BLIND, are we?"

⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were BLIND, you wouldn't have any sin, but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Who has closed eyes in this story? ... closed to what? Why?
- What are the concerns of...
 - The blind man?
 - The neighbors?
 - The pharisees?
 - The blind man's parents?
 - The disciples?
 - Jesus?

..and Tanak (Hebrew Scriptures). This included a list of 39 works forbidden on the Sabbath – among which figured healing and kneading – such as what Jesus did with the mud.

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EXPELLED ἐκβάλλω ekballo

To throw (cast, put) out; banish; it can be either violent or not violent.

a. to drive out, (cast out): a person;

b. to cast out powers, demons...

c. to expel a person from a society: to banish from a family.

So they banish this man who has been living as a beggar on the street, after he has become "whole" or once again considered as a full human.

BLIND :: Johns insists on the themes of blindness and sight in particular in this text. We can see that in the repetition. This image of sight to the blind is mentioned repeatedly in the prophets, always associated with the coming of God's kingdom or messiah. We see that especially in Isaiah 35 and 42.

"⁵ God the Lord says—
the one who created the heavens,
the one who stretched them out,
the one who spread out the earth and its offspring,
the one who gave breath to its people
and life to those who walk on it—

⁶ I, the Lord, have called you for a good reason.
I will grasp your hand and guard you,
and give you as a covenant to the people,
as a light to the nations, ...

- The religious leaders seem so concerned with maintaining tradition by keeping the rules that they are unable to see the miraculous thing that happens right in front of them. When in your life have you struggled to see what was happening right in front of you because it didn't fit into your expectations?
- What are you unable to see? Or, how are you blind?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

⁷ TO OPEN BLIND EYES,
to lead the prisoners from prison,
and those who sit in darkness from the dungeon.

⁸ I am the Lord;
that is my name;
I don't hand out my glory to others
or my praise to idols.

⁹ The things announced in the past—look—they've
already happened,
but I'm declaring new things.
Before they even appear,
I tell you about them.

Isaiah 42:5-9

¹ The desert and the dry land will be glad;
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom like the crocus.

² They will burst into bloom,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
They will receive the glory of Lebanon,
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.
They will see the Lord's glory,
the splendor of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands,
and support the unsteady knees.

⁴ Say to those who are panicking:
"Be strong! Don't fear!
Here's your God,
coming with vengeance;
with divine retribution
God will come to save you."

⁵ Then THE EYES OF THE BLIND WILL BE OPENED,
and the ears of the deaf will be cleared.

⁶ Then the lame will leap like the deer,
and the tongue of the speechless will sing.
Waters will spring up in the desert,
and streams in the wilderness.

⁷ The burning sand will become a pool,
and the thirsty ground, fountains of water.
The jackals' habitat, a pasture;
grass will become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway will be there.
It will be called The Holy Way."

Isaiah 35:1-8