

## INTRODUCTION

Maybe you've heard the expression, "Here's mud in your eye." It is used in England as a toast to celebrate something. Like when someone says, "Cheers!" There are two theories about the origin of the phrase. One is that it came from the soldiers in the trenches in World War 1 who ate and drank in muddy conditions. The other theory is that it goes back to the miracle performed by Jesus when he made mud and put it on the eyes of the blind man. One commentator said this theory makes sense because people often toast to happiness and good health.

So we're not sure why some people say that, but we are absolutely sure that Jesus healed a man born blind by mixing his holy spittle with dirt to make mud which he put on or in the man's eyes. It's a fascinating story.

John 9:1-12. As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him. We must do 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." After he said these things he spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means "Sent"). So he left, washed, and came back seeing. His neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit begging?" Some said, "He's the one." Others were saying, "No, but he looks like him."

He kept saying, "I'm the one." So they asked him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So when I went and washed I received my sight." "Where is he?" they asked. "I don't know," he said.

When we started our study of the Gospel According to John last year I told you that the Apostle organized his account by highlighting seven signs – or miracles. We've already looked at five, so this is miracle number six. Let's review them. Jesus turned water into wine to remind us that He is the solution for every deficit. Then He healed a Nobleman's son, revealing that He is the answer to our doubt. Then Jesus healed the paralyzed man to show us He is the answer to every disability. He feed 5,000 hungry people to let us know He can meet our deepest desires. Then He walked on water to a boatload of terrified disciples to remind us that He is the answer to despair. This miracle is about giving sight to a blind man which proves that He is the answer to our darkness.

We have a record of Jesus giving sight to the blind more than any other ailment. But of all the miracles of Jesus this is the only one that is performed on a man who was born blind. Every

time Jesus healed the blind He was fulfilling the Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 35:5 that predicted, "The eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf shall hear." We are going to be devoting four messages to John 9, and all of them surround this miracle. In this message, I want us to focus on three important truths.

### **1. Jesus corrected the false belief that suffering is payback for a specific sin.**

The disciples asked Him, "Master who sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind?" Many of the Jews believed that a person with a disability or deformity suffered because of some specific in their life.

Don't we sometimes think the same way? What did this person do to deserve their suffering? Pay attention to what Jesus told His disciples, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned that he was born blind, but this happened that the work of God might be displayed in his life." (John 9:1-3)

Now, it is true that all suffering is a result of sin. We all suffer from the fallout of the fall of Adam and Eve. And some people do bring about their own suffering, especially in the case of the who suffer from addictions. But according to Jesus, we are wrong when we try to find a cause and effect reason for every person who has a disability or is suffering.

Do you remember the story of Job? He was a man who was blessed by God. One day God and Satan were talking. God said, "Have you considered my servant Job? He is a faithful, honest man." The devil said to God, "The only reason Job praises you is because you have bribed him with so many blessings. If he lost all his stuff he would curse you to your face." God said, "As usual, Satan, that's a lie. But I give you permission to suffering in his life. When you do, you'll see that I'm right and you're a liar."

So over a short period of time, Job lost it all. He lost his flocks, his fortune, his family, and his fitness. Even his wife said, "Give up. Curse God and die." But Job refused.

During this process of suffering, three of his friends came to comfort him. The three friends were Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad the Shuhite. Some people say that the shortest man in the Bible was Knee-high Miah. But it was actually Bildad the Shuhite!

They came to comfort Job, but they ended up criticizing him. Their conversations were based on the same thinking that Jesus' disciples displayed. They said, "Job, you must have done something pretty awful to be suffering like this. Go ahead and confess it. You are being punished because of your terrible sins."

But Job remained faithful and patient. He said, "I know that my redeemer lives and in the end, he will stand upon the earth." And in the end God rewarded his faithfulness. In Luke 13 Jesus was talking to His disciples about a recent disaster where a stone tower had collapsed and killed eighteen men. The disciples were thinking those guys must have had it coming to them.

Again, Jesus had to correct them. We read, Jesus said, "Or those eighteen that the tower in Siloam fell on and killed—do you think they were more sinful than all the other people who live in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well." (Luke 13:4-5)

Jesus was saying, "You're asking the wrong question. You shouldn't be asking why the tower fell on those men. You should be asking why the tower didn't fall on your heads. Because you are all sinners and everyone needs to repent."

Some of the most godly, faithful people I've known through the years had to endure terrible suffering. I remember Jeannette Davis, a lady in my first church. She was immobilized by rheumatoid arthritis in her thirties but she was a joyful person and a great prayer warrior. I remember David Solomon, the gifted singer in our church who suffered from Parkinson's disease for years. He never stopped praising God until he went to heaven. The list goes on and on.

People have often asked me, "Pastor, why do good people suffer?" I don't think that's the best question, because the first thing that comes to my mind is the question, "Who is good?"

In Luke 18 a man approached Jesus and asked Him, "Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Before Jesus answered him, He said, "Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone." The Psalmist says, "There is none good—no not one." (Psalm 14:1) God is good all the time, but I don't think any of us can claim that designation for ourselves. I'm a sinner saved by grace.

We want to know why bad things happen to good people; we're asking the wrong question. Maybe we should be asking, "Why do good things happen to bad people, to sinners like us?" Suffering is no respecter of persons. At one time everyone will suffer—the good, the bad, and the ugly.

God doesn't cause suffering, but the Bible teaches that He can use suffering to deepen our faith and make us more dependent on Him. The great writer C.S. Lewis wrote: "Pain insists upon being attended to; God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." (*The Problem of Pain*, p. 22)

One reason you can hear my voice this morning is because I'm speaking into a microphone that feeds a signal to an amplifier. It makes the sound of my voice louder. Without this amplifier, I wouldn't be able to communicate this message to many of you. When everything is going wonderful in your life, you may not think you need God. But suffering gets our attention and reminds us that we cannot make it without God.

## **2. Before we meet Jesus, we all suffer from spiritual blindness.**

We started WEBS last Wednesday night. We're studying every miracle in the Bible. This Wednesday I'll continue to teach on the miracle of Creation in Genesis 1-2. Last week I talked about the age of the earth. This Wednesday I'll be talking about the creation of Adam and Eve.

I've said many times there is a parable in every miracle. In other words, there's the miracle, then there's the spiritual lesson you can learn from it. Sometimes Jesus gives us freebee. After He fed the 5,000 He said, "I'm the bread of life."

In the healing of a blind man, here is a message behind the miracle. There is a terrible condition of spiritual blindness what is far worse than physical blindness. This man in John 9 was born blind. We're all born spiritually blind and unless we see the light of Jesus we remain in darkness. And the devil wants to keep people in blindness. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:4. "The god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

I recently saw a documentary on the National Geographic Channel about the world-famous eye surgeon from Nepal, Dr. Sanduk Ruit. This show was about one of his visits to North Korea where he performed 1,000 cataract surgeries. These patients were all partially or totally blind. There's a scene where the room is full of hundreds of people seated in a room with bandages over their eyes. One by one, Dr. Ruit goes to a person and removes the bandages. The expression of awe on their faces are amazing. First they are shocked, and then they smile and cry and hug a loved one with them. But what they do next is what really got my attention.

At the front of the room there is a large picture of their great general, Kim Jong Un. After having the bandages removed, each person rushed to the front and they fall on their knees before the picture and begin to praise Kim Jong Un.

They bow and hold out their hands and say, "I praise you Dear Leader for restoring my sight. I will serve you forever." It's like a Pentecostal Revival service except everyone is praising Kim Jong Un. One man even said, "Now you have given me sight, Dear Leader, I will be able to see to kill many Americans for you."

When I saw this, I thought, "They are praising Kim Jong Un because they believe he came from heaven. I couldn't help but think, "These people just had their sight restored, but they are still completely blind to the truth." Spiritual blindness is worse than physical blindness. And in a couple of weeks we'll be talking more about spiritual blindness.

### **3. Jesus deals with each one of us in His unique way.**

In the four gospel accounts Jesus gave sight to several blind people. But He didn't deal with each of them the same way. This is the only blind man who had mud from spittle put over his eyes. On another occasion Jesus spoke a word, and the blind received sight. At other times He would touch the person and they would be healed. In Mark 8 Jesus touched a blind man and he couldn't see clearly. He said, "I see men as trees walking." So Jesus touched him again—and then he could see clearly.

To me this reveals an important principle. Sometimes people want to have exactly the same experience with God that someone else has had. When some people come to the Lord, they cried and wept for joy. And there are others who quietly receive Jesus as their Lord. Some

Christians talk about a second blessing. They say after you are saved you must have a second blessing, like the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Still others insist that if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you'll speak in tongues. But when you study how Jesus dealt with people, He used a different approach for different people. He told Nicodemus to be born again. He told the woman at the well He could give her living water. He told the rich young ruler to go sell all he had and follow Jesus.

In Acts 9, Saul of Tarsus was saved in a dramatic way. He saw a blinding flash of light that knocked him to the ground and he heard Jesus speaking to him. We don't have another account of anyone being converted like that. Our God is a God of variety. He deals with each of us in different ways. The truth is that you can't put God in a box and dictate to Him how He must act. If you ever think you have God figured out, think again.

You may struggle with a lot of questions about God that you should just surrender to His omnipotence. We read in Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." This is the Lord's declaration. "For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)

I heard Vance Havner talking about this years ago. He said just imagine that three of the blind men healed by Jesus got together to compare their experiences. One man said, "I was blind and Jesus touched me once. So if you want to have the right experience with Jesus you should be touched once." The second said, "No, that's not right. I was blind and Jesus touched me, and everything was blurry, so He touched me again. So if you want to be correct, you need to be touched twice." The third guy says, "Both of you are wrong. You didn't have the right experience. I was blind and Jesus spit in the dirt and made mud and place it on my eyes and I washed it off and I could see. So if you want to be truly orthodox, that's what must happen to you." Vance Havner said, "If those three guys were around today we'd have three new churches by Friday. The once-touched church. The twice-touched church, and the spit-in-the-eye church!"

Don't try to imitate anyone else's experience. Let God be God and do as He chooses in your life.

**Take away truth: When we obey Jesus in faith, God's power is released.**

In this miracle, Jesus gave the blind beggar some specific instructions. He said, "Go down to the Pool of Siloam and wash off the mud and you will see."

Jesus was on the Temple Mount and the Pool of Siloam was in the very bottom of the Kidron Valley. It was a treacherous 20-minute walk for someone who could see, much less a blind man.

What if the blind man had said, "That's too far. I don't understand why I have to walk all the way down there. I can use of the mikvahs or pools right here at the Temple Mount. After all, this mud is getting irritating."

Fortunately, he didn't do or say that. He obeyed the precise instructions of Jesus – even if he didn't completely understand WHY to do it that way. As a result of obeying Jesus, he received his sight.

Sometimes we find something in the Bible where God gives us clear instructions. And we think, "This just doesn't make sense to me." There are plenty of things in the Bible that don't make human sense. It doesn't make sense to turn the other cheek, or to go the second mile, or to give thanks in all situations. But we are called upon to obey the Lord. And in the act of faith and obedience, God's power is released.

I can't explain to you mathematically how giving the first 10% of your income to the Lord will bless you, but it does. I can't explain to you why we should love the unlovely, but Jesus told us to do that.

Samuel spoke these words when Saul had disobeyed the Lord, "Does the Lord take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)

Jesus got run out of His home synagogue in Nazareth when he referred to a miracle where God had healed the Gentile man named Namaan from leprosy. It's one of my favorite miracles it's found in 2 Kings 5. Namaan was a government official in Syria who heard that there was a prophet named Elisha in Israel who had been known to perform miracles. So Namaan and his caravan of horses, chariots and riches arrived in Israel near Jordan River. Namaan approached the residence of Elisha. But Elisha didn't even go out to meet him. He sent this messenger to tell him, "Go dip seven times in the Jordan River and you'll be clean."

Then Namaan was outraged. He said, "I've come all this way to see this healer. I thought he would at least come outside and cry out to his God and wave his hand over me or something. We've got beautiful, clear rivers in Syria. And he wants me to dip in this muddy creek called the Jordan?"

So Namaan turned away in anger and prepared to return to Syria. But one of his counselors told him. "If the man of God had told you do some great thing to be healed, wouldn't you do it? Instead he gave you simple instructions. There's the river. You should at least try it."

So Namaan obeyed the Lord's command through Elisha, even though it didn't make sense. One dip, then a double dip. Triple dip. After the sixth dip, his skin was still leprous. But after dip number seven the Bible says that his skin was restored and became that of a baby's skin. Ladies, if you could bottle a skin care product like that you could make a million dollars overnight.

Namaan returned to Elisha. He said, "Now I know that the only true Living God is the God of Israel." And he gave praise to God—not to God's prophet.

Remember those seven dips the next time you are obeying God. Some of you have obeyed God four or five times. And you say, "I tried obeying the Lord, but nothing changed." Remember the

Namaan lesson: Keep on obeying God. And when you keep on obeying the Lord, you'll see His power released.

## **CONCLUSION**

Both Namaan and the man born blind demonstrated faith and obedience. Are you doing that? Have you surrendered to Jesus and submitted to Jesus in total obedience? That's a winning combination. As the writer of the old hymn reminds us, "Trust and Obey; for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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