

Sermon for March 15, 2026  
"Who's Blind Now?"

John 9

"As he walked along, Jesus saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'"(John 9:1-2) First of all, we need to forgive the disciples. Their question seems very offensive to us modern people, but they didn't know any better. They were merely reiterating what they had been taught when they were growing up.

Most in Jesus' day believed that all sickness and injury was the result of sin. The obvious problem with this understanding is that it didn't account for the sickness and suffering of the innocent. Especially those who were born disabled or sick. What did they do to deserve this punishment? So to make their understanding fit reality they reasoned that birth defects were the result of the parent's sin, or it was the result of some sin committed by the person in the womb.

First, we have to admit that there are a few situations in which this understanding fits. If a mother takes drugs or drinks during pregnancy, then her irresponsible acts may cause birth defects. It is painfully clear that most illness or birth defects are not the result of sin. It would be downright cruel for God to make an infant blind because of some infraction by the parents, and the idea that an unborn baby can sin is obviously contrived and ridiculous.

Jesus' response to this question is one that every disabled person and every not yet disabled person needs to hear. Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him."(John 9:3) Then Jesus spit on the ground and made some mud from the dust of the earth and the water from his mouth. Next he took this mud and covered the man's eyes with it, and he told the man to go to the pool and wash his eyes out. When the man had done that he could see for the first time in his life.

Now when you first read that, did you wonder why Jesus put spit in the man's eyes? In essence that is what he did. The symbolic nature of that act would have been apparent to any Jewish believer in Christ. In the beginning the Father had taken the dust of the earth and with the breath of his mouth breathed life into the first human. In the same way the Son took the dust of the earth and repeated this act of God to bring sight to a blind man. It is also significant that the pool he washed in was named "sent". After all Jesus had been "sent" to bring recovery of sight to the blind.

Remember: Jesus had said that the man was blind so that God might be made manifest. Jesus was God in the flesh, and there he was reenacting one of God's greatest acts: creation. That man's blindness was an opportunity for Jesus to reveal who he was. Jesus was not merely some wonder-worker who went around holding tent meetings. He was God's only begotten Son with the power of creation at his command.

But the religious leaders couldn't see it. They were blinded by their own petty concerns. Instead of praising God for giving sight to the blind, they complained about the Sabbath being broken. Instead of asking themselves if this healer might be the messiah, they bickered over whether he was even Godly or not. Most of what follows is them calling witnesses to try to see the truth. In the end they threw the man who was healed of blindness out because he was, as they said, "born in sin."

Do you "see" the irony? The religious leaders who may have had 20/20 vision can't see the truth. Jesus is the truth, in the flesh, and they were blind to it, but in the end the man born blind sees clearly. He can not only see Jesus physically, but he can see that Jesus is the Messiah.

This whole episode is really about spiritual blindness. The man's physical blindness becomes an opportunity for God to help people see spiritually. Not only were his physical eyes

made to see, but our spiritual eyes are made to see because of him. The reality of Spiritual blindness remained however. The religious leaders are proof of that. The man's physical blindness may not have been the result of sin, but the religious leaders' spiritual blindness and our spiritual blindness is the result of sin. Like the man born blind we need to see the light.

Do you "see" where all this leads? The man born blind is a model for us to learn from. Our adversities, our trials, our illnesses are not always punishment for sin. Occasionally they are. We need to be honest with ourselves when we bring trouble upon ourselves and confess those sins. I would argue that in the vast majority of cases our troubles are not the direct result of our sins. Rather these troubles are opportunities for God to be manifest, made known through us.

That is the way God works. God takes our disadvantages and turns them into advantages. God takes the negatives in our lives and turns them into positives. God takes our disabilities and turns them into opportunities. God takes our blindness and uses it to help us see things much more important than sunsets.

Where would we be without the testimonies of people like Helen Keller or Joni Eareckson Tada? Helen Keller who was both blind and deaf learned to communicate in an age that simply put such people away. She said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision." Joni Eareckson Tada became quadriplegic from a diving accident. She wrote, "My weakness, that is, my quadriplegia, is my greatest asset because it forces me into the arms of Christ every single morning when I get up." Where would we be without the inspired writings of St. Paul who had a thorn in the flesh? Paul said he prayed three times that God would take it away. We are not sure what that thorn on the flesh was. Some have speculated it was his vision, but in the end God left it there to remind him that "this precious gift is in clay jars." (2 Cor. 4:7) God took their disabilities and disadvantages and turned them into blessings for all who would see them.

The next time you see a man born blind, or a woman with no arms, or a boy with spina bifida, or a girl with Down's syndrome: don't ask, "What did they do to deserve that?" If any human deserves punishment, we all do, because we have all sinned. Instead remember what Jesus said to his disciples; "It is not for sin but that God may be manifest." Look at that person as a person, and allow God to open your eyes to wonderful truths you have always been blind to.

The next time you come face to face with your own disability, your own pain, your own sickness, your own suffering: don't ask yourself, "What did I do to deserve this?" Odds are you are not being punished. Just lift your pains and illness to the one who came to bring sight to the blind. He may cure you, like he did the man born blind, or he may let you stay as you are, like Joni Eareckson Tada or St. Paul, but either way he will take your lack of abilities and lack of strength, and turn them into spiritual blessing for yourself and others. Joni Eareckson Tada said, "Anyone who takes the Bible seriously agrees that God hates suffering. Jesus spent most of his time relieving it. But when being healed becomes the only goal - 'I'm not letting go until I get what I want' - it's a problem." Helen Keller said, "Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light." Paul said that God said to him "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)

Jesus came to bring sight to the blind. He still works miracles and makes the physically blind see, but he knows that often the state of our souls is more important than the condition of our bodies. So sometimes he leaves us in a physically disabled condition to give us a much greater Spiritual insight. Come to Christ with all your physical and spiritual pain and let him recreate you just as he recreated that blind man's eyes. The religious leaders refused to see and called the man born blind and Jesus sinners. Journey to the light and open your eyes to the truth, even if that truth is hard to see.