

# Fourth Sunday in Lent

**"I SEE," SAID THE BLIND MAN**

**John 9:1-41**

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**Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer**

1As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. 4We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, 7saying 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?" 9Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." 10But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11He 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." 12They 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. 14Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15Then 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." 16Some 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. 17So 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." 18The 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 19and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21but 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." 22His 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. 23Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24So 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." 25He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27He 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?" 28Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." 30The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. 32Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34They 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?" 36He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." 37Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." 38He 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." 40Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" 41Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see," your sin remains.

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## DIAGNOSIS: The Blame Game

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** – *Whose fault is this?*

When something goes wrong, we look around to hold someone accountable. "Who left the door open?" "Someone forgot to put the toilet seat down!" If the phone bill is too high, the guilty party is forced to comply with limited minutes during the next month. When an earthquake on December 26, 2004, caused a tsunami in the Indian Ocean that resulted in the deaths of over 300,000 people, the world tried to blame someone for the tragedy. An obscure minor fault line gave a tremendous heave. Everyone asked, "Whose fault is this?" The worst blamers were Christians when some said that the wave of death was against Muslims for their bad treatment of Christians. The disciples of Jesus did the same thing. They saw a man who had been blind from birth and wanted to know who was to blame, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" (v. 2).

## **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** – *It's not my fault. I didn't do it.*

The reason we want to know who's to blame is so that we can avoid having accusing fingers pointed at us. When the Pharisees wanted to know who was to blame for healing the blind man, if he really was born blind, the parents of the blind man avoided getting blamed by saying, "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," (v. 20). The Pharisees wanted to blame someone for daring to make mud and heal on the Sabbath day. Their job was to make sure that people got blamed for breaking God's rule. But there is confusion about whether or not there should be blame. Can someone be blamed for doing a miracle on the wrong day? Is a person obedient to God if he heals on a day when it's against God's law to heal, or is a person to blame for breaking God's law by healing on the Sabbath? When one's relationship with God is based on obeying laws, assigning blame is essential. Stick someone else with the blame so that you remain blameless before God. The Pharisees were good at blaming others, for they were "disciples of Moses" (v. 28). They were not going to be disciples of Jesus. They knew God had "spoken to Moses" (v. 29). They didn't know whether Jesus came from God (v. 29). They did not trust Jesus. The Pharisees and all who blame do so in order to try and escape God blaming them. When life is lived under God's laws, blame is always present.

## **Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem)** – *Blamed to Death*

Not trusting Jesus as one who has the authority to heal on the Sabbath results in being blamed by God. God blames people who fail to see that Jesus is the Son of Man (v. 35). Jesus has come to judge so that those who do not see God's mercy in God's law may see God's mercy in Jesus; and so that those, who think they see God's way of dealing with those who do wrong, remain unable to see God's mercy. People who say they see that others are to

blame are stuck in the dark about Jesus and have no mercy from God. As Jesus says, "Your sin remains" (v. 41). Where sin remains, death remains.

## **PROGNOSIS: The Forgiveness Game**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** – *"I am to blame," says Jesus.*

God's work of mercy was revealed in the man born blind. Dirt and spit were put on his eyes, he washed and now he saw (vv. 6-7). Christ became dirt and spit for us by his death on a cross. Who is to blame for Jesus dying on a cross? God takes the blame. Jesus takes the blame for our blindness, our unbelief, our inability to see the goodness of God for us day after day. Because Jesus took our blame, God does not blame us but puts the mud of Christ's cross on us and washes it off in our baptism so that we may see. We see that Jesus is the Son of Man. God's work of mercy is revealed in God raising Jesus from the dead!

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution)** – *We Are Blamed with Jesus*

When we see Jesus crucified and then raised from the dead, we are like the blind man who now can see. Do we believe in the Son of Man (v. 35)? Who is the Son of Man that we may believe in him? We have seen him; he is the one who died and rose (v. 37). And we confess with the blind man, "Lord, I believe" (v. 38). We trust that Jesus has taken God's blame away from us and replaced it with God's mercy and forgiveness and light. This trust we have in Jesus is why God declares us to be holy, righteous, and that we are to be given eternal life.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** – *I Forgive You*

When the blind man was given his sight, he had to testify again and again that he could see. He also had to testify about Jesus, finally seeing that Jesus was the Son of Man, the one to trust, and by that trust he received life with God in Christ's name

(John 20). Having life with God frees us from blaming others as the way to try to get life with God. We change from being concerned about not being blamed, to trusting Jesus. We change from blaming others to keep us safe and, instead, forgive others. In fact, we can even take the blame on us, as Jesus did. We can take the blame on us, trusting Jesus to give us life, just as he trusted God to give him life. We take the blame, as Jesus did, and respond to our enemies with Jesus' words, "I forgive you." When others see that they have been freed by Christ through our forgiveness, they too experience freedom from God's blame; they too are given life with God and are free to give life to others. They, too, instead of demanding, "Whose fault is this?" can say, "I forgive you."