

TOGETHER WITH THE MASTER

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Scripture: John 9:1-7

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. "Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?"

"It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world."

Then he spit on the ground, mad mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. He told him, "Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam" (Siloam means 'sent'). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

Would you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, this is an encounter that Your Son had, and we pray that through Your Spirit, You would teach us this morning, what You would have us learn from it and how best to apply what You are teaching us in our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Most times, when we read this passage of scripture, the thought that grabs our attention is anchored in verse 6 – when we think about Jesus mixing His saliva with mud, and then putting it on the blind man's eyes, I sometimes wonder whether, when the blind man heard about it later, he was thankful he was blind at that moment. It would take a lot of faith to see Jesus spit and then mix it with mud and put it on your eyes, and then follow instructions. Yet, I believe that this passage has many beautiful nuggets that we can mine from it. I'd like to take them verse by verse, and then look at it from a bird's eye view and see if there is one particular thought that we can pull from it.

9:1

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. And His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, why was this man born blind? Was it because of his sins or the sins of his parents?"

Now the fact of sin in this particular episode seems to be beyond question. The problem is, was the sin that of the man or was it that of his parents? Here the question sought to establish a connection between the suffering that this man was going through and some definitive act of sin that must have happened. The answer that Jesus gives makes it very clear that these two equations were not involved at all. In fact, if we could take something from it, we could take the fact that we need to be careful when we judge something without really knowing the entire background. They had already taken it for granted that sin was involved.

Suffering and sin sometimes go together. But it doesn't necessarily have to be that God is the one who ordained suffering into our sinful lives because of what happened. Here we have a man, blind from birth – and the question; did he sin or his parents? And Jesus says, "Neither

of them sinned.” Suffering can come from a different place altogether. What could that place be? it could be that suffering can come because God wants to declare and display His glory.

9:2-3

Jesus replies, “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins. This happened so that the power of God could be seen in him.

When we think about it this side of the Cross, we can imagine Jesus answering that question. He was going towards Jerusalem, He was going to be suffering, and He was going to be suffering with no sin involved at all. Sometimes, that’s what comes into our lives, that we go through suffering that is not the result or caused by sin, but God allows it into our lives so that His glory may be displayed through it.

Christ says, of uncommon calamities, that they are not always to be looked on as special punishments of sin, because they are for the glory of God, and to manifest His works.

9:4

He says, “We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work.”

Jesus says that there are things that you and I need to be doing. The point in this verse that I like is that Jesus uses the words “We must carry out the tasks that are assigned to us.” ‘We’; we do it in conjunction with God. God has a plan and a purpose, and then He invites us to be a part of that plan. But there is also a cut-off date. That date is the life that we have. As long as we have life, it is day. But night is coming when no one can do any of that work.

9:5

Jesus says, “But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”

During the time that He was in the world, Jesus kept doing the things that He heard the Father ask Him to do. And He invited His disciples to be a part of it. But we too, even though Jesus has gone, continue to have Him in our midst through the Holy Spirit. So, there is still light for us to do the work that He has called us to do while we have breath in this world. Which brings us to the hard truth that there are things that God is inviting us to do along with Him what are important for us to accomplish while we still have breath.

What can we learn from these couple of verses?

- Be careful to not pity or despise and blame those who may be afflicted naturally. Sometimes we look at people who are going through difficult situations, or who may even be born differently. We blame them or try to assign some reason for it. We must be careful not to judge.
- All suffering in the world is not the effect of sin, and in this case, Jesus expressly declared it.

9:6-7

Then He spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, spread the mud over the blind man’s eyes. He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam.” So, the man went and washed and came back seeing!

I believe that this is the point that we need to settle on this morning – God wants to do things in our world. But for Him to act in our world through the power that He brings, He also wants His church, His people to work with Him. Just take this particular passage by itself: Jesus applies this clay, this mud on the man's eyes. Then He tells him, "Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam."

God's power was brought to bear, but the man also had to exercise faith. If he had just put his hands to his eyes and said, "My goodness! He's put mud on me. I'm going to find some other place and find a way to wipe this off and carry on with my life," he would still be a blind man. This is the point that I believe that God wants us to hone in on this morning, that there are many things that God wants to do in our world. He wants to bring His power to act on situations and circumstances, and yet, He looks to His church and say, "Will you do what I need you to do to make this happen in the world?"

Let me give you a couple of examples, the principle being: God's power plus our obedience leads to God's accomplished will, or God's will and our will being completely aligned and His purposes being fulfilled.

Remember Lazarus? He's dead; he's been in the grave a couple of days. They try to deter Him from bringing him out, saying that there's going to be a stench. Then Jesus says, "Roll the stone away." And then He says, "Lazarus, come forth." And Lazarus comes forth still bound in the grave clothes. Jesus, then turns to the people and says, "Release him and let him go." I've often thought there would have been no problem for one who is bringing life back to a dead person to clothe him as well. yet, Jesus wanted the people to be involved in what He was doing as well. "Lazarus come forth," and then He said to the people, "Take away those cloths. Unravel him and let him go."

Take the feeding of the multitude. Jesus knew He had to do something. God's power was going to be evident, but He needed something from the people – five loaves and two fish were given. Then Jesus used the power that He had to make it sufficient to feed people till there were twelve baskets left over.

God's power and a child's obedience brought God's kingdom down into the world. Mud and spit and then obedience to go to Siloam and wash yourself brought sight to a blind man.

I may have told you this before, but it bears mentioning again, because it brings this point home from our own personal experience. Our son Ranjo was very sickly when he was born. Fifteen days after he was born, he was on an antibiotic, and from then on, he had difficulty. Every time he exerted himself, he would have difficulty breathing. Then he would have to sit in a crouched position and just wait to have his breath settle. This went on till he was about 9 or 10 years. We were in the United States around that time. He was on a particular medicine called 'Seldane', which was quite expensive. One day, when Sheila and I were in church, a lady came to us and asked if our family used any medications. She worked with a doctor and got a lot of free medicines that were given by medical reps. She said that she could easily give them to us. And she had Seldane and gave it to us. And Ranjo used it.

Until one day we ran out. We called her and promised to bring the medicine in the evening. Evening came and she didn't come. we didn't have the money to buy the medicine. We waited a couple of days and then called her up again. She apologized, saying that she forgot, and again promised to bring it that evening. Again we waited for a couple of days, but she

didn't come. When this happened a third time, Sheila and I looked at each other and said, "We've been praying for Ranjo to get well." He was allergic to just about everything – peanuts, chocolates, wheat, egg, milk. He had to have a special diet. Till now, God has provided that medicine for us. Could it be that we don't need the medicine anymore? But then we came to the realization that to really find out if he is healed, we need to let him eat those things that he was allergic to. We took that step of faith, believing that God had indeed healed him, and said, "Ranjo, go ahead and eat." And he did! He just gorged on stuff that he'd never been able to eat; and he was fine. All that happened was that he put on an incredible amount of weight after that. God's power still required our faith to tell him to go ahead and eat.

I believe that God continues to depend upon His church to accomplish those things that He wants to do in our world. Look at what's going on with the COVID-19 virus and you say: What is God wanting to do? Or what is He wanting me to do so that we can join hands with Him, so that His power comes in and eradicates this virus? What is God inviting you and me to be a part of, to join with Him?

I was praying with pastors yesterday – we got together on a call and we were praying. At the end of that prayer, one of the pastors said that they were thinking about all the people who were quarantined, and how there was nobody to talk to them. What would happen if they were to die and if they had never heard of Jesus? One of them said that somebody in the church had said that he was willing to even go into that place with them and share the gospel if that is what God wanted him to do. Willing to get infected even, to be able to share with them about Jesus.

I wonder, beloved, as we look at what's going on in our world today, the incredible amount of suffering. What is it that God wants to do with us, to use our help as well, in reaching out to a world that is suffering? I believe that is the question that we must answer as we look around. Being His church, what is our role in doing what we can, to alleviate suffering all around us. There is so much suffering, beloved. There are ones who are going through incredible hardship because of the virus. They are all alone. There are ones who are going through fear because they have been exposed. They have come from a place where somebody had it. There are ones who are living with anxiety because they don't know where money is going to come from, they've lost their jobs.

What is God inviting you and me to be a part of as He looks down in His world, on His people that He loves so dearly? What is God's plan that involves you and me? I believe that's where we need to land this morning, and say, "Lord, if you want somebody to stand in the gap, here I am. I'm willing. Whatever it takes, Lord, I will be the person that You can use, however You want to use me." Can we say that to Him this morning, in response to His Word? I will stand in the gap, here I am, send me.

We took an offering earlier. We don't want that offering to come to us. I'd like for you to look around at people around you who may be desperately in need of some money, and give it to them. It could be the person who has been ironing your clothes. With everybody staying at home, his business has dropped. It could be the one who collects the garbage; you notice that they don't have masks. So maybe you can buy masks and sanitizers. However, God is leading you to use that money, I want you to use it. Just be obedient to the Lord. but I want to leave this question with you: What is God requiring of you this morning? and as you spend

time with that question and come to understand what it is, are you willing to say, “Here I am, Lord. would You use me?”

Let’s pray together.

Lord, we know that even in a time like this, when everybody seems to be without any solutions about what to do, You have a plan. We ask that You would show Your plan, that You would show Your hand, unveil what needs to be done so that this virus is contained and eradicated. Lord, we are Your church. We are Your instruments here, Master. We ask that You would take all the decisions that have been offered to You and us in ways that we need to be used, so that Your will and our will come together and that the kingdom of heaven grows here on earth. Inspire us through Your Spirit. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.