

**This is How God Works**  
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John 9:1-7 ESV

9:1 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent [or "Sent One" or "Missionary"]). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

Core            God is constantly using the worst experiences to bring about the greatest good.

Call            Ask God to help you see 2020 and your own life as the context for God to be glorified.

Compel        Hopeful, patient anticipation to see how God will be glorified in our many crises

Intro

We all love a good story. Stories are what have sustained us through the pandemic. Great books, great movies, fascinating podcasts - binge watching a whole season over the weekend – humans CRAVE stories. Stories are the way we make sense of things. Stories are meaning-makers.

John's gospel is full of great stories, and perhaps the best-told story he tells is the story of the Man Born Blind in chapter 9. It has drama. It has comedy. It starts with the big existential question: why does God let bad things happen? It features one of the strangest miracles in the whole Bible, with Jesus spitting and mudmaking. As wonderful as this healing is, it creates all kinds of trouble for the healed person! The story has a hero, it has villains, and it ends us – the audience, seeing the world – and ourselves – differently from now on. In fact the whole story is about sight:

We need this story in particular right now, because we desperately need to a way to make sense of 2020. We need to know: What does this all mean!? Christians also want to know: Where is God in all this, and what does it look like to follow Jesus right now?

This story is a fantastic case study in understanding How God Works.

First,

*Jesus notices hurting people.*

Throughout the gospels, it seems that the people who are most hurting are the ones Jesus most quickly notices. Jesus has just left the temple grounds on the Sabbath where a theological debate with the Pharisees got so heated that they were about to pick up rocks and stone him. But instead of having his attention consumed by his own problems, Jesus notices the person everyone else has probably gotten really good at ignoring. It must have been Jesus' noticing that got the disciples attention, and led them to ask their question. But while they want to keep things abstract, Jesus is about making things concrete. They ask him a philosophical or theological question about the nature and origin of sin. Jesus brings it down to the personal and the intimate. It is about this man, and this situation, and how God's glory might be revealed in this circumstance.

Maybe if I told you that God notices your pain this morning, that will be all the good news you need to hear. In the midst of all the big problems and the metanarrative of global catastrophe, God notices what is happening to YOU. God is moving toward you. God is coming with mercy, not with judgment. God isn't interested in blaming or shaming. God intends your healing. Even if what you are suffering from has been with you your whole life, God knows and God cares. Maybe you feel like you've been waiting for somebody to notice, to come close, to care. Now you know that God does care, God hasn't forgotten or ignore you or your pain.

*Who do you know that needs to God's notice today?*

Second,

*Jesus reveals how things really are.*

Jesus continually reveals how God really is, how God really works, and how things really are. The person of Jesus is at the heart of the gospel, and the gospel always about not only seeing things as they are really are, but indeed seeing into the depth of things. In his ministry of revelatory healing, Jesus enables us to see that things look like one thing, but are really something else.

This looks like a problem, but it's really a solution.

This looks like the result of sin, but it's really going to bring you to God.

This looks like mud, but it's really medicine.

This looks like suffering, but it's really redemption.

This looks like calamity, but it's really salvation.

*What is the area of your life in which you would like Jesus to show you how things really are, and what is really happening?*

Last,

*Jesus shares the work with us.*

You might have picked up on how this story – even the little bit of it we are focusing on this morning – is shot through with symbolism. When Jesus takes his own spittle and dirt from the ground, we remember how God took the dust from the ground, formed a person and breathed life – transforming *adamah* into *Adam*. When the man goes to the Missionary pool, he acts out of form of baptism – a cleansing that his going to change his life forever, making him a new person who is hardly recognizable to his neighbors, and giving him a new vocation as a missionary himself. By making mud, Jesus has done work on the Sabbath and set up yet another dramatic scene with the Pharisees.

But Jesus wants the disciples to understand that this work is urgent, and it is their work too. “**We** have got to be doing the works of the One Who Sent Me while it is still daylight; nighttime is coming, when no one can work.” John 9 is a case study in how God works in the world. It is a case study how the Gospel works in one person’s life and affects all the lives around him or her. And it is a job description for the work of the church. When the gospel heals our blindness, we get sent out to tell our story. And there is no time to waste!

This story sits between two amazing statements from Jesus about the work:

I can only do what I see the Father doing. John 5:19

And

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. John 14:12

Whatever we see Jesus doing, we know that is how God works.

Whatever we see Jesus doing, that is what we are to be doing too.

Conclusion:

This would be a pretty great story, if that were the end. But this is just the beginning. We think the only mess that gets made here is the messy mud that Jesus puts on the man’s eyes. But that mess is about to this man’s life so much better - and so much messier! – than he can imagine! The gospel has a way of doing that. The gospel inevitably messes up our lives – in a really good way. We will take a look at that next week.

Let’s pray.