

I WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE!

John 9:13-41

Key Verse: 9:25

He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

Last week, we learned how Jesus opened the eyes of a man born blind. For the first time in his life, this man was able to see the faces of his family and friends. A new life began for him on that day. But Jesus was not finished with him yet, for there are different kinds of blindness. With spiritual eyes, Jesus saw the blind man as one who was created by God to display God's glory. However, the Pharisees saw him as a worthless blind beggar.

In today's passage, Jesus opens the spiritual eyes of the formerly blind man. We learn how important it is for us to remember the grace of God. To receive God's blessing is one thing; to bear it is another. May God bless us to learn how to bear the grace of God to the end!

I. JESUS PUT MUD ON MY EYES; AND NOW I SEE (13-17)

By the grace of Jesus, the blind man's eyes were opened. We can imagine how happy he was. He probably cried many tears of joy. He promised himself that he would never forget the grace of Jesus who opened his eyes. But the reaction of his neighbors was somewhat unexpected. Some said, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" (8) Others said, "No, he only looks like him" (9). What a strange reaction! They did not seem to be happy at all. They should have celebrated the miracle healing and praised God. But they didn't. It was as if they didn't want this man to get well. Perhaps they wanted him to remain as a blind beggar. Perhaps they felt better about themselves whenever they saw the blind beggar sitting at the roadside. They would say, "My life is not so great, but at least I am better than that blind beggar."

The man sensed that they were not happy. But it didn't matter. He insisted, "I am the man" (9). His blindness was history now. He needed to be thinking about how to fit in to the community as a new man. Some people quickly forget about God once they get what they want from him. But this man was not an ungrateful person. He began to testify to the grace of Jesus based on the facts. He said: *"The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see"* (11).

But his neighbors would not listen to his testimony. They took him to religious authorities as if he had done something wrong (13). The Pharisees were even more unhappy when they saw the man. Why? As religious leaders, they should have been happy to see the wonderful work of God. But they were unhappy because the man's eyes were opened by Jesus, whom they considered as a threat to their position as religious leaders. They did not care about the beggar. Nor they cared about the wonderful work of

God in his life. But one minor technical detail about the miracle caught their attention. It happened on a Sabbath day. The Pharisees decided to discredit Jesus based on this. They wanted to accuse Jesus as a violator of the Sabbath law. So they began to interrogate the man, asking how he had received his sight. The man testified clearly: *“He put some mud on my eyes, and I washed and now I see”* (15).

After hearing the testimony, some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner perform such signs?” So they were divided (16). Some religious leaders wanted to ignore the work of God. Others wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt. But those who wanted to condemn Jesus had a stronger voice. They continued to pressure the man, saying, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened” (17). The Pharisees threatened the man. Now, this man must have known that this wasn’t the first time the Pharisees attempted to condemn Jesus based on the Sabbath law. But the man refused to be intimidated by their threat. He refused to be silent about Jesus who changed his life. He replied, “He is a prophet.” He did not yet know the Messiah personally. But at least he acknowledged Jesus as a man from God, based on what happened to his eyes. At that time, anyone who acknowledged Jesus risked an excommunication which was very serious. He could not worship in the synagogue, could not find a job, and could not socialize. So the man was aware what he was risking by testifying Jesus as a prophet. It was not easy for him to bear the grace of God. He was pressured and intimidated. But he held on to the grace of God based on what he experienced in his life. We learn that it is important for us to hold on to the grace of God, based on our personal experience in God.

II. ONE THING I DO KNOW. I WAS BLIND BUT NOW I SEE! (18-34)

The Pharisees’ attempt to get a false confession out of the man failed because he held on to the grace of God. They had the inconvenient truth working against them. The blind eyes of the man were opened by Jesus—something none of them could do. And the man would not change his testimony despite their intense pressure. But the Pharisees did not give up. They sent for his parents. His parents were very afraid of the Pharisees. “Is this your son?” the Pharisees asked them as they began their interrogation. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?” (19) What did the parents say? They answered, “We know he is our son, and we know that he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself” (21). His parents were terrified of offending the religious leaders. They carefully avoided any reference to the healing by Jesus, let alone praising Jesus. It was because the Jewish leaders had already decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That’s why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him” (22-23).

The Pharisees’ back-door approach to condemn Jesus through the man’s parents did not work. So they decided to summon the man again. This time they threatened him using God’s name. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner” (24). They pressured him to declare that Jesus was a sinner. They told him to suppress the truth. The Pharisees were supposed to be servants of God. But they were

evil. They even invoked God's name to achieve their own goal of condemning Jesus. They said, "Give glory to God by telling the truth." They didn't mean what they said. They meant the man should give a false confession they could use against Jesus. What was his reply? Let us read verse 25. *He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"* His testimony was simple and factual. He didn't know many things, but he knew one thing. He used to be a blind man. But now he could see, because of Jesus. Despite the pressure, this man did not calculate this and that. If he did, he would have had many things on his mind such as finding a new job, getting married and fitting into the community. But he didn't calculate. He did not compromise. He held on to the grace of God. He could not, would not, deny God's grace. The title of his life testimony was, "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" His favorite hymn would have been "Amazing Grace." (Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.") His heart was filled with thanksgiving.

Some of us might say, "Well, if God cured of my blindness, I would have done the same thing." But this isn't always the case. After all, ingratitude is one of the two original sins of human beings. Once, Jesus met ten lepers who were suffering from the debilitating disease and the ill treatment by their society. Out of his compassion, Jesus told them to go and show themselves to priests. As they went, they were cleansed. But only one returned to him to thank him. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" (Lk 17:17-18). We could easily be like the 90 percent who failed to remember the grace of Jesus.

When we desperately need something from God, we plead with him desperately. But when God answers our prayer, we are so excited about the blessing itself that we forget about the one who gives the blessing. We forget to thank him. We are like little children who get so excited about a new toy that they forget who gave the gift. This is especially true if we are pressured by this world to compromise. St. Polycarp (69-155) was a church leader in Smyrna in the second century when Christians were severely persecuted by the Roman Empire. Before they burned him at stake, they offered him freedom if only he would deny Jesus once. But he told them, "My Lord has never denied me. How can I deny him?"

By the grace of God, we have been set free from sin and death. Jesus, the Son of God, sacrificed himself on the cross to save us from eternal condemnation. His innocent blood was shed to cleanse our sin-stained blood. How can we forget this grace of salvation? Twenty four hours a day isn't enough for us to thank him and praise him. In reality, however, we often forget the grace of Jesus because of our busy, daily grind. We often complain a lot about many things. We should at least confess once in a while, like this man did, "You know, I used to be a terrible sinner. I don't have time to tell you all about my past sins. But one thing I know: I was a sinner, but Jesus saved me!"

Before meeting Jesus personally, St. Paul had been an ambitious young rabbi in Jerusalem. In order to score points with the Jewish authorities, he actively persecuted the early Christian church. He arrested many Christians in Jerusalem. But he wasn't

satisfied. He obtained a permission letter to go to Damascus to arrest more Christians there. But on his way to Damascus, the Risen Christ appeared to him and said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He fell to the ground and his eyes became blinded by the light of Christ. The Risen Christ unconditionally forgave all his sins and chose him as his instrument to be a light to the Gentiles. Paul always remembered this grace of Jesus. In his letters, he often wrote how he had been a terrible sinner but God saved him to be his servant. In 1 Corinthians 15:9, he said, “For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am....” Paul knew one thing—that he was a sinner who was saved by the grace of God.

Let us remember the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and be thankful in all circumstances. We can be joyful even in the midst of trials if we remember the grace of our Lord Jesus. We can joyfully testify his grace to others who don’t know Jesus personally yet. Like the man in this passage, we can testify, “You know. I used to be a blind man who blindly followed my sinful desires. But Jesus opened my eyes to see the spiritual reality. I don’t know much. But one thing I do know: I was blind but now I see!”

III. DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON? (35-41)

The formerly blind man had to pay a heavy price when he steadfastly held on to the grace of Jesus. The Jewish authorities threw him out (34). He was excommunicated. He had to face the cold reality of holding on to the truth. But Jesus did not leave him alone in the cold. Look at verse 35. *Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”* Jesus found him, as a good shepherd would find his lost sheep. How did Jesus help the man? Did he give him some money? Did he promise him a good job? No. Jesus asked him the question, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man was abandoned and cast out of his community. His human situation seemed worse than before, because he lost his job as a beggar. Now, he didn’t even have the meager income he used bring home. Even so, Jesus did not sympathize with him. He didn’t say, “I feel your pain.” Instead, Jesus planted in him faith in the Son of God. He asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” We learn that faith in God is most important in our life. Human speaking, faith did not seem to help this man at all. In fact, he seemed to be worse off because of his faith. He needed a good job and a good friend more than faith. But the truth is that, in the end, only faith in the Son would matter. Only faith in Jesus would give him eternal life in the kingdom of God. If we believe in the Son of God, we will reign with Christ in heaven in eternity. This is the mystery of the gospel. A blind beggar can be an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ (Ro 8:17). This is why we must help young people to have faith in Christ, first and foremost, in addition to being good friends to them.

What was the man’s response to Jesus’ question? Look at verse 38. *Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.* He said, “Lord, I believe.” It was his personal confession of faith. Jesus was now more than a prophet to him. Jesus was his Lord. It was a moment when his spiritual eyes were opened. His healing was complete now. It says that he worshiped Jesus. In our materialistic society, many people worship something other than God like money, power or pleasure. Those who worship things of

this world are idol worshipers. But this man worshiped the Lord. Worship is an expression of one's intense love and adoration toward God. This man loved Jesus. For the first time in his life, he felt loved and he began to love. The Bible does not say what happened to his life after this confession of faith. But we can imagine he lived a life with full of hope and meaning, loving God and loving others. We know this because that's what we are striving to do, as forgiven sinners.

In today's passage, we learned that we must remember the grace of God in our hearts. With the advanced technology today, we are inundated with all kinds of information. Our minds are often occupied with things from TV, Facebook, Twitter, smartphone, and so on. But we should remember one thing clearly. Like the man in this passage, we should confess, "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" We should also answer clearly to Jesus' question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Then we can love God and love one another in Christ. May God help us to remember the grace of God!