

Passing By?

John 9

Have you ever thought about how many things ‘pass by’ in a day, a week, a year or even five years?

How many people do you pass by in a day?

How many opportunities do you pass by in day?

How many things in life would you love to pass by and cannot? – Like your mortgage, the gas pump or your electric bill?

I think all of us would like to pass by pain, suffering, grief, disappointment, rejection, failure, having to work like a dog, or being born with a disease or some type of handicap.

How many of us try to defend God when something happens horrific happens in the world? This is called “*theodicy*”. God does not need us to defend him – He knows what we go through each day – God understands suffering, pain and disappointment – doesn’t the Lord say in Isaiah 65:2 “*All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations.*”

Take one look at the cross – that God would become one of us – to be born in a pig’s trough, rejected and spit upon, mocked, whipped, flogged and finally crucified by his own creation says enough! Augustine in his book *The City of God* tells us “Evil events are not caused by God but have their origin in **our misuse of freedom**. God permits these events to occur and uses them to accomplish the divine purpose. God exercises sovereignty over evil by bringing good out of what by itself is only negative and destructive.” We shall see this as we read from John’s gospel this morning.

God is in the midst of our life everyday!

Are we moving too fast and have allowed him to pass by?

Thankfully Luke 19:10 tells us “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*”

Let’s turn now to John 9 – we will read the whole chapter!

In this story – we read about a man who most likely was a beggar. You see, blind people had no choice back then but to beg so they could survive. Usually they would be found outside of the temple area or on the busy streets of Jerusalem often outside the sanctuaries in hopes people who pass by would be in a charitable mood. In this case it was probably just outside the temple grounds since Jesus just left that area according to 8:59.

The story begins with the disciples stating in V2. "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" The Jewish Rabbis believed in a direct cause-and-effect relationship between suffering and sin. In fact many people today believe when something wrong happens they claim "what could I have done wrong to deserve this!" So the story begins with the assumption that the blind man sinned or was a result of the parent's sin that caused their son to be blind.

We are going to look at two points:

- I. Type of People & Their Reaction
- II. The Man's Response to the People & Jesus

This one man, like all the rest of us, is blind to the power and presence of God until Jesus, the light of the world, reveals the God capable of curing our vision disorder. With his words in verses 3-5, Jesus clearly sets the stage for this entire story. He declares himself to be the "light of the world" sent to illumine the darkness. Jesus passes by each and every day with his eternal flash light looking for those who are blind in opposition to as Paul tells us in 2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* Satan is blinding those who believe they already see –

Has he passed by you today? Have you seen his flashlight? Have you felt the warmth of his light as He passed by? Or have you pulled down the shades to keep the light out or in hope that he won't pass by or look for you?

Let's look at 1st point:

I. Types of People & their Reaction.

There are 5 types of people!

A. The disciples – what was their reaction? They were thinking about who sinned – the man or the parents! It seems they were more judgmental than compassionate, more concerned over the how the sin came about then in helping the man's desperate situation. But the Master (Jesus) changed their attention away from the cause to the purpose.

Look at verse 3 *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. In the theological world this is called *tremendum* which states that "evil is real and powerful."*

B. The blind man's neighbors – What was their reaction? They were non-committal, ride both sides of the fence type of people. They were today's "Sunday Christian". They are the type of soil that Jesus called 'rocky' because when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

Look at verses 8-12 - *His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded.*

In other words, some believed and others didn't and some wanted hard facts, they had to see it to believe it!

C. The Pharisee's – are called them the nit-pickers. Do you remember that term? Anyone who has ever had a child come home from school with a note proclaiming that the notorious head louse has once again made an appearance knows all about the phrase "nit-picking." Each "nit," or tiny egg of the louse, must be meticulously combed, picked or pulled from the single strand of hair it is attached to. The fact that this procedure must be carried out on a squealing, enraged, probably embarrassed six-year-old only makes the task that much more unpleasant. Unfortunately, many people have perfected the art of nit-picking so competently that they feel compelled to demonstrate their skill on every situation in their lives. Nit-pickers are always noting what is wrong with something and someone rather than what is right. They can't enjoy anything, especially anything that has a flaw in it. With little sense of humor these pickiness-people are always looking for the "gotchas" to flaunt at others. The Pharisees are nit-pickers! Instead of rejoicing with the man at the miracle of sight, they can only focus on the possible Torah infringements and how they might condemn Jesus. Look at verse 16. *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 do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.* The day in which Jesus made the mystery miracle mud mix was on the Sabbath. That is what is so cool about Jesus! – He was all about grace; he was about mercy & love, not about religion, law & legalism. This is why the common people were so drawn to him! This is what drew me to Jesus! I hated religion – it is filled with hypocrisy & hypocrites, it's filled with fake, phony and fanatical man made rules and ideas! – For Jesus' take on religion see Mark 7: 6-16

D. The blind man's parents: they didn't want to be involved in fear the Pharisee's would ex-communicate them from the synagogue. During the temple times or early church, if you confessed that "Jesus was the Christ" or "Jesus is Lord" you were history, you were outta there! – The synagogue was the community center – it was like today's Pathmark- it was the nerve-center of the community. Being cast out it meant no worship of God and no social communication with friends & family – it would be like having leprosy! They are like some of us today when someone questions our faith and asks "do you read the

bible or you do you go to church?" the parents of the blind man are like many who come to church but are afraid to express or sing to Jesus because of what others may think. Look at verse 19 *"Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know 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." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."*

E. The blind man: Jesus and his disciples were passing by when the disciples label the blind man as a 'sinner' Jesus then corrects them and uses the opportunity to affirm his identity as the 'messiah' and fulfilling one of many prophecies. Isaiah 29:18-19 says *"In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."*

Look at verses 6, 7. *Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.*

So the mystery miracle mud mix is made – good thing he was blind because how many of us would let someone spit a big disgusting wad of goop in the ground (it must have been a big one to enable him to mix it). During these times saliva was thought to have medicinal power for healing because it was associated with magical arts – I wish I could have seen Peter's face when this went on!! So Jesus uses the clay to develop the man's faith and also teach the nit-picking, wound-licking Pharisee's about God and his Sabbath.

Now picture yourself as the blind man – A man named Jesus puts a mud pack on your face and tells you to go wash in the pool of Siloam – how many people would he pass by before he would come to that spot? Can you imagine if you saw someone in the mall with mud on their face walking towards the fountain where everybody tosses pennies into the water- what would people say? "Hey, filth-face!" / "He's got a mud ball for an eyeball!" "What happened? Kids play mud pies on your noggin?!" / "Nice look! Be glad you're blind, boy."

So, it's not a pleasant walk. It's degrading, embarrassing, humiliating. But the man has been in touch with Jesus, and for some reason he believes. He believes that this teacher who calls himself "the light of the world" is somehow going to bring an end to his lifelong darkness. Besides, what has he got to lose? His pathetic progress down the rocky streets of Jerusalem would be mocked by townspeople whether he had mud on his face or not. So he goes and washes ... and comes back able to see. The mystery miracle mud mix opens his eyes, and he proceeds to testify that it was Jesus who gave him his vision.

II. The Man's Response to the People & Jesus

A. To the Neighbor's: verse 11,12. *He replied, "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. "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.*

B. To the Pharisee's: Let's now call them Wound-Lickers:

Remember getting a mosquito bite or a small scratch when you were a kid and then having to listen to your parents' repeated, "now don't pick at it." Of course, they had to keep telling you because there is something self-destructively fascinating about an open wound. We are drawn to it, we want to mess with it, re-examine it, pull off he scab a little at a time to see how it is healing. But this fixation can easily lead to infection - even to death. Let's see the man's reply to wound-licker's in verse 24-33

A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." 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!" Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

When the Pharisees in verse 18 recalled the healed man's parents as possible witnesses against his previous condition of blindness, they are being wound-lickers. They cannot leave the situation alone, but return to it, trying to expose some imagined wrongfulness. These Pharisees do not even realize that the wound they are re-opening is the gaping hole of their own ignorance and spiritual bankruptcy. Jesus was in their midst – God Almighty – the one who they proclaimed to know, who they thought they had all figured out, and here he was PASSING RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEM! Sadly they missed it!

Notice the progression of the blind man – Jesus was passing by he stopped and touch the man, and the blind was ready for a life-changing experience!

1st - He was the man they called Jesus. (V.11)

2nd - He knew him as prophet (V.17)

3rd - He saw Jesus as the one who was “from God” (V. 32,33)

C. To Jesus: After the man was thrown out, Jesus came and found him – Remember that Jesus came to seek & save that which is lost! Look at Verses 35-38

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

The blind man didn't let Jesus pass by and neither should you!

Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

In closing – we must not let Jesus pass by as the Pharisee's did – the nit-picking, wound licking people who had no thought they had no need for a savior!

You see, they had sight but no light – Those who admit (humbleness) blindness could receive Jesus who is the light of the world and be able to see their sin and need for salvation, but those who thought they saw (don't believe in sin) would remain in their darkness.

If you let Jesus pass by in this life, when your time here ends, he speak these words these eternal "Your guilt remains- depart from me I never knew you" and came to seek and save but you watched me pass by.....

