

The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost – August 6, 9 & 10, 2008
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

The Blind See. The Seeing are Blinded John 9:1-7, 35-39

At times you hear people complain and wonder why God doesn't do miraculous signs today as he did in the Old Testament era or during the ministry of Jesus. The Lord is still performing miracles everyday and he is active and working in this world. We often fail to see the Lord's activity or credit what has happened to good fortune or chance. As we continue our study of different events in Jesus' ministry the apostle John records for us a miracle of healing that Jesus performed and the resulting turmoil and upset that this caused among the religious leaders of the day. As we focus our attention on Jesus' healing of the man born blind we consider this truth – **THE BLIND SEE. THE SEEING ARE BLINDED.** As we consider the wonderful miracle that Jesus performed for the blind man we learn that **I) God's Work Is Evident Among Us.** Unfortunately, there are different reactions to the Lord's work among us **II) Some Believe. Others Close Their Eyes.**

GOD'S WORK IS EVIDENT AMONG US

Jesus had left the temple grounds in Jerusalem because the Jews had attempted to stone him. He was still in the city when he and his disciples came upon a man who had been born blind. The disciples asked Jesus this question, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (v. 2) This was a normal question that was often asked and is still asked today. When something bad happens or someone is stricken with an incurable disease, the question is raised, "Who sinned that this has taken place?" When hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast several years ago, we heard people comment that this was God's punishment on the wickedness of the people who lived in that area. Often we will do the same thing to ourselves. When something terrible happens or we come down with a serious illness, we may think that God is now punishing me for some of the wrong things that I have done in my life. Usually that is not the case. Listen to Jesus' answer, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." (v.3) Jesus' answer reminds us of the truth that God causes all things to work for good in the lives of those whom he loves and has called according to his purpose. God does marvelous works and uses the illnesses and tragedies that happen in our lives for our own good and also as a testimony to others to draw them to him.

Then Jesus goes on, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (Vv. 4-5) Jesus still had work to do. It was still day and there were many things he still had to accomplish in order to carry out the mission that his Heavenly Father had given him in order to save the human race. But notice Jesus didn't say, "**I** must do the work of him who sent me." He said, "**We** must do the work of him who sent me." Who is this we? It is Jesus and his followers of all time. It includes his disciples who were with him in Jerusalem that had asked the question about the blind man. It includes us his disciples here at St. Mark's in 2008. What work do we have to do while it's still day before it becomes night and we can no longer work? The work we have to do is to get the message out that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Savior of the world. That is what Jesus was doing throughout his ministry. He was fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies about the promised Messiah, the deliverer whom God had promised to our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. This is the same promise he then made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants. The miracle that Jesus performs when he restores the blind man's sight is in fulfillment of what God said through Isaiah in our Old Testament reading, "to open the eyes of the blind." (Isaiah 42:7a) He was proclaiming himself to be the Almighty God. That is the very reason that the Jews wanted to stone him at the temple courts just prior to Jesus meeting this blind man. They knew who he was claiming to be. They knew that he claimed to be the promised Messiah and God himself, they rejected that and they hated Jesus for that very fact. They rejected his claim as their Savior and they rejected his teachings. For Jesus claimed that he is the light of the world. He said that whoever follows him and his teachings will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Recently I was in a cave when

the guide turned out all the lights. You could not even see your hand touching your nose. To live in total darkness is very depressing and frightening. There are many people who can see physically but they are going through life in total spiritual blindness. They have no idea who they are, why they are here or where they are headed. They have no real understanding of the purpose and meaning of their existence. That can be very depressing. Just consider the great number of suicides among young people today who see no reason for living, no meaning or purpose to their existence. Jesus Christ is able to change all that.

Look at what he did for the man born blind. The first thing Jesus did was to spit on the ground and make some mud. He then took that mud and placed it on the man's eyes. He told the man to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. The Pool of Siloam was near the temple and it was the only fresh water supply for the city of Jerusalem. It was fed from a spring outside of the city walls by an underground tunnel that was over 1,700 feet long. The blind man did as Jesus had commanded him and we are told that he came back seeing. God's work was definitely evident to this blind man and to his friends, relatives and neighbors. A change had taken place. This man who had never been able physically to see anything was able to see everything. We see God's work all around us. We see it in the world which our almighty God has created. We see it personally in our own lives as God grants us health and healing from sicknesses and disease. We see God's work as he provides for our needs of food, clothing and shelter. We see God's work as he protects us from evil and causes everything that happens in our lives to work for good.

SOME BELIEVE. OTHERS CLOSE THEIR EYES

The reaction to Jesus' miracle seems rather strange. You would expect everyone to be happy and to celebrate with this man, wouldn't you? When someone is healed people are usually happy for the person. When you think what happened here - a man who had never seen the light of day suddenly sees all things. First those who saw the man seeing questioned whether this was really the man who had been born blind. Some said he was. Others said he just looked like the blind beggar. The man convinced them that he was really the man who had been born blind. He told them that a man named Jesus had put some mud on his eyes and told him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. He told them, "I did this. And now I can see." The people took the man to the Pharisees. Now the Pharisees investigate this whole incident. They say that Jesus could not be from God since he made this mud on the Sabbath which according to them was doing a work and Jesus had broken the Sabbath law. Others said that no sinner could do such a thing. Finally, they turned to the man and asked, "What do you say about him?" The man replied, "He is a prophet." (John 9:17) Then the Pharisees began to question if this man had really been born blind. So they called his parents in and questioned them. They confirmed that he was their son and had been blind since the moment of his birth. When the Pharisees asked them to talk about the man who had healed their son, they responded that he was an adult and could answer their questions on his own. Then they called the man in a second time and told him to give glory to God for they said this Jesus is a sinner. The man said, "I don't know if he is a sinner or not, but I do know that I was blind and now I see." (John 9:24-25) Finally in frustration and anger the Pharisees threw the man out.

When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had thrown the man out he went to him and he performed another even more spectacular miracle. He said to the man, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (v. 35b) The man asked who the Son of Man was and Jesus responded, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." (v. 37) The man cried out, "Lord, I believe." (v. 38) He then fell down and worshiped Jesus. This man who had been physically blind could see and now this spiritually blind man had come to see Jesus as his Savior and Lord. This man knew Jesus as his healer. He healed him of the blindness he had since birth. He also healed him of the spiritual blindness that he had from the time of his conception in his mother's womb. He now knew that he had a Savior who had rescued him from the greatest blindness he had, his sin and his separation from his God and Creator. By the grace of God, you and I also see. God has performed the miracle of bringing us sight after we entered this world in spiritual blindness. Through the power of God's Word in Holy Baptism the Spirit has brought us to see Jesus as our Savior and Lord. As we have read the Bible, as we have been instructed and taught God's Word and as we regularly gather here in God's House to hear his Word proclaimed the Spirit continues to keep us seeing and knowing the truth, Jesus Christ.

After the man confesses his trust in Jesus as his Savior, our Lord says, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." (v. 39) That is rather a strange comment, isn't it? We can understand that he wants the blind to see, but that those who see become blinded? What does Jesus mean? He wants those who don't know him to see and trust him as their Savior and Lord. However, those who think they see and they have it all together and think they don't need a Savior, they are blind and unfortunately, will be lost forever. But those who recognize their blindness and see their need for help and sight are healed and really do see spiritually. I remember once instructing a person who had attended church for years and this person told me during our time of instruction, "I had a real problem with this confession of sins. I thought, "I'm not that bad." "Why should I be confessing my sins?" "God should accept me because I am a basically good person." However the longer he came to church and the more he heard God's Word, the more he realized that he really did need God's help and forgiveness. God had opened his eyes to see his need and his Savior Jesus.

As Jesus opened the spiritual eyes of the man to whom he had restored physical sight, so he has done this for you and me. By the grace of God we see and believe. Because of God's work in our lives through his almighty word we confess our sinfulness and our need for help. We rely totally on Jesus Christ for pardon and for the help we need to enter into the Lord's presence in heaven. Thank God that his work is evident in your life and mine. Praise him that our eyes have been opened and we trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

Amen.