19-25 March 2023 Gradual insights

Read the passage from (John 9-1-41. It is written below.

### Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

**9**As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. **2**His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

**3**“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. **4**As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. **5**While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

**6**After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes.**7**“Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

**8**His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” **9**Some claimed that he was.

Others said, “No, he only looks like him.”

But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”

**10**“How then were your eyes opened?” they asked.

**11**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.”

**12**“Where is this man?” they asked him.

“I don’t know,” he said.

### The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

**13**They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. **14**Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. **15**Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

**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 perform such signs?” So they were divided.

**17**Then they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”

The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

**18**They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents. **19**“Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

**20**“We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind. **21**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.” **22**His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. **23**That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

**24**A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,”they said. “We know this man is a sinner.”

**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!”

**26**Then they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

**27**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?”

**28**Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses!**29**We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”

**30**The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. **31**We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will.**32**Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. **33**If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

**34**To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.

### Spiritual Blindness

**35**Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

**36**“Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

**37**Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

**38**Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

**39**Jesus said,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+9%3A1-41&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26480a)] “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

**40**Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

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

**Bible notes**

This extended narrative is the fruit of discussion and reflection on an incident of healing. It has been applied to the situation of Christians towards the end of the first century, when Jewish-Christians began to be expelled from the synagogues (see verse 22). As the drama unfolds, we are aware of contrasts between the characters. The man starts out as blind but gains not only physical sight but also spiritual sight. Some of the religious authorities insist that they have spiritual sight and dismiss Jesus, ‘This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.’ They refuse to learn anything from either Jesus or the man he heals, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?’ Refusing to see God’s work among them, they remain in sin, preferring darkness to light (see 1.9-11). The man is also contrasted with his parents. As parents of a disabled child, they were profoundly aware that something wonderful had happened, but fearing the consequences of upsetting the authorities they will say only, ‘He is of age: ask him.’ This exchange suggests that the man was very young, which makes his courage all the more remarkable. He insists throughout, with a God-given confidence, ‘I am the man.’ Noticing that the authorities are divided about Jesus he audaciously asks, ‘Do you also want to become his disciples?’ Holding fast to the truth, ‘I was blind, now I see’, his understanding of Jesus progresses. The man who put mud on his eyes is a prophet, is from God, is Lord. ‘And he worshipped him.’

**Reflection**

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Jesus’ reaction to the blind man differed from the attitude of others. Jesus gave him dignity, and involved him in the healing process. Elsewhere (Mark 10.46-52), Jesus asks a blind man what he wants, rather than making assumptions. Does this inform our behaviour towards those who are differently-abled? Do we value all equally and acknowledge their contribution? Do we listen to what people want, or make assumptions that may be inappropriate? Jesus gave the blind man courage and confidence to flip from being passive into becoming an active witness and a teacher. Do we enable others to use and develop their gifts? How inclusive are we as a Church? How can we promote and extend true inclusion?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What do you find striking about this image?
* When have you not been able to believe your eyes?
* What is God showing you through this week’s story?

## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well. (CF Alexander, 1848).

The week ahead is a blank canvas.
There will be many familiar places and faces.
But, Lord, thank you that we have met with you today,
and you have opened our eyes anew.
Let us not take our preconceptions with us,
but give thanks for all the new opportunities ahead.
**Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Open my mouth to speak about you.
Guide my thoughts and increase my understanding.
Stir my heart to love as you loved us.
Move my hands and feet to serve you in others.
In the name of Jesus Christ, my example and friend.
**Amen.**

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