

The Third Sunday in Lent

March 23, 2014

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

John 9:1-7, 13-17, 24-27, 34-39

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 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." 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...They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 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." 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. Finally 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."...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?"... To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out. 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. Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." (NIV)

There are no accidents. What do people mean when they say this? I guess it depends on the person using this expression. The scientist might use this as a way of saying there is a reasonable and scientific explanation to everything that happens. The humanist might say there are no accidents because you have to take responsibility for all your choices. Then there might be others who disagree with this statement. Perhaps we even doubt this. After all, how many times have we said or heard in our lives *"it was an accident."*

But what do we have to say about this as children of God? As believers in Christ Jesus couldn't we also say there are no accidents? We trust that God is in control of all things. We rejoice in the fact that Jesus rules everything for the good of His Church. We find comfort in the truth that God works all things, yes all things, for our good. There are no accidents. I pray this is a truth we recognize once again this morning as we witness more evidence of God's amazing grace. Reflect on and rejoice in what God has done for you because: **It is no accident you see!**

I find this to be one of the coolest stories in the Scriptures. Jesus is with his disciples in or around Jerusalem when they come across a blind man. He had been that way since birth. The

disciples wonder why. It seems unfair. They ask Jesus, ***"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*** The disciples' question reveals a common misunderstanding. When people suffer it is not always some specific sin that caused it. We suffer at times because of sin in general in this world. This is the case here as Jesus' replies: ***"Neither this man nor his parents sinned."*** But it was no accident that this man was born blind. Listen closely, dear friends, to what Jesus says next. ***"This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. 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."*** Did you catch the reason this man was born blind, the reason he suffered all those years, the reason Jesus and His disciples ran into him precisely at this time? It is so ***"the work of God might be displayed in his life."*** It is so this blind man might come to see the true light of the world.

After Jesus says this, Jesus makes some mud with his spit and puts it on the blind man's eyes. He tells him to go wash and the man goes and comes back home seeing. Now here is where I think the story really gets good. I encourage you to read the whole chapter this week. As you might imagine this healing creates quite a buzz. Some people recognize this man as the one born blind. Others say it must just look like him, but they too soon see it is him. People ask him what happened and he tells everyone what Jesus did. But Jesus is no longer around. Yet, soon everyone is talking about this man and what Jesus did to restore his sight.

The Pharisees also get word of this and they call this formerly blind man in for questioning. They ask him how he is able to see. ***"He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."*** This starts a debate among the Pharisees over how a sinner could do such miraculous things and why Jesus dare do this on the Sabbath. Not finding answers they ask this poor guy: ***"What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."*** With his eyes just starting to become truly opened he replies, ***"He is a prophet."*** Not satisfied the Pharisees call in this man's parents and ask if this is their son who was born blind. They say yes but when the Pharisees want to know how he sees they are too afraid to answer. They know how the Pharisees felt about Jesus. They had threatened to throw anyone who acknowledged Jesus out of the synagogue. So this man's parents say they don't know and to ask their son about it.

So the Pharisees bring this man back in a second time. Listen to the conversation: ***"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?"*** The Pharisees keep questioning. This formerly blind man keeps answering. Do you see what starts to happen? He gets more confident, more courageous, and more certain Jesus is not someone to ignore. After all, he has the truth on his side. All he did is keep speaking that truth whether they liked it or not. He was blind, but now because of Jesus he sees.

Not able to stand up against the truth, the Pharisees resort to insults. Then they turn to the once blind man saying: ***"You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out."*** I want to make this clear – they were not just throwing this man out of the room or the synagogue – they were throwing him out of the church. They were excommunicating him and throwing him out of their fellowship. But they were also in a way throwing him right into the arms of Jesus. Hearing that they threw him out, Jesus finds him. ***"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***

worshipped him. Now this man could really see! Jesus gives him sight far more precious than anything he saw with his eyes. He now sees Jesus as the Messiah. He sees his Savior.

It is no accident this man receives physical and also spiritual sight. The work of God is displayed in this man's life just as Jesus said. Isn't it wonderful to see how God worked all this out for this blind man's good? Isn't this another amazing example of grace? While I think this is one of the coolest stories, it isn't the only example I want us to focus on today. If you want to see another example of grace, go home today and look in the mirror. It is no accident that you are here today. Think about this for a moment. Why are you here? It is no accident. God brought you here this morning. No, God did not throw you into your cars and drive you to Amazing Grace so that you were here for 10am worship. But God did come to you in your baptism and give you the gift of the Holy Spirit. God did work through the power of His Gospel so that you understand Jesus is your Savior from sin. God did open your eyes to the forgiveness, peace, mercy, joy, life, and salvation that are yours in Christ Jesus. It is no accident you see.

When as children of God we say there are no accidents, I want you to think about this as we follow Jesus this Lent. It is no accident Jesus is betrayed and arrested. It is no accident Jesus is beaten and mocked. It is no accident Jesus is falsely accused, tried, and handed over to be crucified. As you see Jesus bleeding, suffering, and dying on the cross remember it was no accident. It is no accident that Jesus died and was buried. It is certainly no accident that on the third day and to this day Jesus' grave is empty. There were no accidents here, only God carrying out his plan to save sinners, only God acting in grace to pay for our every single sin and save us from hell. This is the Savior the blind man's eyes were opened to see. This is the Savior we see. You can be sure of this – it is no accident you see!

I want there to be one more encouragement for us today. If there are no accidents then think about the people God has placed around you who still do not see. God has put them in your life for a reason. Jesus tells his disciples to work while it is day for night is coming. Like the blind man we don't need years of training to simply speak the truth about what Jesus has done for us.

I may have shared this story with some of you, but years ago I saw a special done on a man whose name I can't remember who used to spend his free time going out to the golden gate bridge. He went out there to try to talk people out of committing suicide by jumping. The special said he had saved the lives of hundreds of people. There was one question he was asked that stuck with me. He was asked how he knew which people were about to jump. He answered, *"You can tell by the way they walk that they aren't going anywhere."* I pray we keep our eyes opened for those who are not going anywhere, for those who are still blind, for those who need Jesus. He is the light of the world! Point others to Him! Thank God we see Him! Thank God with our lives safely in His hands there are no accidents. Amen.