

“The Works of God Displayed in You!”

Whose fault is it? Isn't that how we operate? Who caused the crash – who spilled the milk – was it the smoking or genetics that caused the cancer – whose responsible for this massive debt? It's a question we ask again and again.

St. John begins his Gospel quoting Genesis 1:1 – “in the beginning.” The Lord obviously wants us to focus on the “genesis,” the creation, the source of all things. The disciples ask – “what's the “genesis” of this man's blindness? Who's at fault – him, or his parents?

While we are fixated on the problem, Jesus goes to the heart of the matter – dare I say, the “genesis.” “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” The man and his parents ARE sinners – but Jesus focuses our attention on “the works of God” that will be displayed IN HIM.

So, let's see what happens. Let's not be blind to what Jesus is doing. Let's watch the blind man, so that we can see “the works of God.”

What does God do? He spits on the ground, makes some mud, “anointed” the man's eyes with it, and says – “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' ... So he went and washed and came back seeing.”

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...” Jesus says to His disciples. God attaches His Word of promise to a visible element – and through water (like through the mud) – God heals. The blind man can see – and you, the sinner – are washed, forgiven, resurrected to a new life.

But that's not the end of the story for this man, is it? He finds himself right back in the real world. He has a whole new life – but he still lives in this same, old world.

Almost immediately the questions begin to fly. Who is this man? Isn't he the blind man who used to “sit and beg”? How can he see? No, he just looks like him.

He must answer for himself. "I AM" the blind man – but Jesus healed me – He put mud on my eyes and sent me to wash – and now I see. A straightforward confession – of an amazing "work of God."

But that's still not the end. The religious authorities get involved. By the way, these religious authorities have already shown their cards – they are against Jesus – trying to discredit Him – saying He is a blasphemer, a false teacher, a Samaritan who has a demon. They're not here for the facts, for the truth – but to further their agenda.

The formerly blind man is caught up in the middle of all this. They grill him – demand a confession. "Give glory to God" – which means – agree with us and say that this man Jesus is a sinner. Even his own parents are afraid to back him up – stepping away – leaving him to handle this problem.

In the midst of all this – it would have been easy to walk away, or agree with their lies – but he confesses what Jesus has done. He doesn't yet fully see who Jesus is – but He knows the simple truths. I AM the blind man and Jesus healed me. He is a prophet (one sent by God to speak and work on God's behalf).

It's AMAZING that you can't see this simple truth! Never since "in the beginning" has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. Can't you see the "genesis" of all this – that it is from God?"

To be baptized is not a one-time event left in the past – it is a washing/healing which creates a new life lived daily by faith in Christ. You are a new creation, a new man – but like the blind man – you are still in the same, old world.

It is not easy to live in this world – surrounded by fear and trepidation, by the malicious intent of others – being pressured to conform, to join others in their lies, to further their agenda. And at times, you don't know what to say.

Like this healed man in our text, you are given to confess the simple truths – so that "the works of God might be displayed" IN YOU. When Jesus authorized His disciples to baptize, He also commanded them to teach all things concerning the "work of God" – thereby giving sight to blind sinners, so that they might know the "genesis" of their healing, and their new life.

The baptized confess – I AM a sinner, healed by Jesus' blood-bought forgiveness – His life given for me, and to me, that I might live a new life. Holy Baptism is a mighty “work of God” which now saves me!

And like this new-creation-of-a-man here in our text – you may very well be “cast out” because of your simple confession. But you are not abandoned. Jesus doesn't heal you in Holy Baptism and then say “you're on your own.” No, He comes to you – He finds you – He continues to nourish and strengthen your faith and confession.

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?” Jesus asks. The formerly blind man knows that the “Son of Man” is the Messiah, whose reign is everlasting. Though healed of his blindness – he still doesn't see – so Jesus, “the light of the world,” enlightens his life. “You have seen Him, and it is He who is speaking to you.”

We are easily attracted to the miracle (the healing blindness), that we might miss “the work of God displayed” in this man. The “work of God” is to REVEAL Jesus to this man, that it is his Savior who has healed him. AND, by His Word, the “work of God” creates a faith that BELIEVES in Jesus, and worships Him.

Healing blindness is a “work of God” – but God works a greater, everlasting healing in you. God is at work in Holy Baptism, in His preaching and teaching, His Absolution, His Supper – and His work is displayed IN YOU – in your life, your confession – as you believe and worship Him.

Sin is the “genesis” of blindness, cancer, our broken world/relationships, perversions, spoilage, and so on – but Jesus is the “genesis” of your healing – the forgiveness of all your sins, your NEW and EVERLASTING life.

By faith you “see” His work for you this day, and hear Him who speaks to you. He is the source of your life and salvation. Thanks be to God, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.