

**Scripture Lesson:** John 9:1-9, 13-22

*Pew Bible N.T. pg. 96-97*

<sup>1</sup> As he walked along, Jesus saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must do the work of him who sent me while it is day; for night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup> When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, <sup>7</sup> saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). The man went and washed and came back able to see. <sup>8</sup> His neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup> Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone who resembles him." He kept saying, "I am he!" ... <sup>13</sup> So they brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. <sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." <sup>18</sup> The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup> and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, <sup>21</sup> but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

**Scripture Lesson:** John 9:24-41

*Pew Bible N.T. pg. 97*

<sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> He answered, "I do not know if he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." <sup>26</sup> They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" <sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out. <sup>35</sup> When Jesus heard that they had driven him out, he went and found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> The man answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." <sup>38</sup> The man said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind." <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

**Response to the Word**

One: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

**All: Thanks be to God!**

John 9:1-41 (*selected verses*)  
03/15/2026 – Saginaw First U.M.C.  
“Into the Light”  
Rev. Amy Terhune

Years ago, after a string of bicycle accidents, the City of London produced a short video ‘Awareness Test’ designed to get drivers to think more about the cyclists with whom they share the road. In the video, there are eight basketball players—four in white uniforms and four in black uniforms. The job of the person taking the awareness test is to count how many passes the white team accomplishes in one minute. No big deal. You just sit there and count. At the end of a minute, they’ll tell you that the correct answer was 13 passes. Then the test asks this question: Did you see the moonwalking bear? And if you are like me and approximately 55% of those taking the test, you will respond: “The what? Moonwalking bear? I didn’t see a moonwalking bear! What is a moonwalking bear doing in the middle of a basketball game?” So they replay the video, and sure enough, about halfway through the minute, a person in a fuzzy brown bear costume comes from the right, moonwalking just like Michael Jackson among the players and disappears off the left side of the scene. [video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wie4v2YCPQY>.] The message, of course, is that so many drivers focus on what they believe to be important—other cars and traffic signals—that they fail to see bicyclists, hence the elevated number of accidents. Now, if you’re interested in taking such a test, just google ‘awareness tests’ and a whole slew of them pop up.

Now, scientists have a name for the part of brain responsible for working during this test. It’s called the Reticular Activating System, or RAS, and it’s located near the back of head, sort of at the top of our spinal column. Without the RAS, we’d be immobilized by sensory overload. The job of the Reticular Activating System is to filter the thousands of stimuli bombarding us at any given moment in order to determine what is important enough to require our conscious attention.

For example, at this particular moment, I am blocking out the noises you all make in the pews, the occasional coughs, sneezes, and children’s cries. I am not thinking about how to keep my balance or the texture of my robes or the sound of lights buzzing and cars passing outside. I’m focused on what I need to communicate in this moment. In fact, short of doing something totally disruptive to the whole group, there is only one person in this room who has the power to distract me without effort. It’s not Bryan, if he moves around over there. It’s not Cal, just behind me. Nope, it’s Izzy, way back in the sound booth. Even though she is a grown adult, my Reticular Activating System knows and prioritizes the voice of my child. It’s scientific fact, and it’s instinctual—I can’t help it!

Over time, we can train our Reticular Activating System to notice what is important to our education, our jobs, our safety, and so forth. We can also grow and develop our spiritual Reticular Activating System. The goal, as followers of Jesus, is to see what Jesus sees, to prioritize what Jesus prioritizes. Back in the year 2000, U2 – the greatest folk band in the world – released a song entitled “When I look at the World”. It’s part of series that some listeners believe are written from the perspective of various ones among Jesus’ disciples. The lyrics go like this:

When there's all kinds of chaos and everyone is walking lame  
You don't even blink now, do you or even look away?  
So I try to be like you; try to feel it like you do,  
But without you it's no use – I can't see what you see when I look at the world.

Which is true. Learning to look at the pain, suffering, and need around us is not something that comes naturally. The other night, I went to see the Saginaw Choral Society’s performance of

*Considering Matthew Shepherd.* One of the pieces was entitled, “Keep It Away from Me”, and the very first line states it simply: I don’t wanna look on this.... And that resonated. There’s a lot of things I don’t want to look on, I don’t want to see. So I don’t, *unless* my spiritual Reticular Activating System is trained to not blink, not flinch, not look away from the chaos.

In our scripture lesson this morning, Jesus brings into the light what people don’t always want to see. Jesus and his disciples are walking along, trying to avoid any further entanglement with the powers-that-be in the temple, when his disciples notice a man who’d been blind from birth, probably begging by the roadside. But they don’t see a man or his story. They see a theological specimen for study. Who sinned, this man or the parents, that he was born blind? In other words, who is God punishing? That is what they believed at the time – ailments were punishments resulting from sin.

But Jesus sees something else. They say that the eyes are a window to the soul, but when Jesus is out one very hot, dusty Sabbath afternoon, his eyes can see the soul of one who has no eyes. Jesus doesn’t see an object or a specimen. He sees a person. A man with a story, with suffering, with years of grief. He sees a channel for God’s glory. And it’s not because God needs to prove his own greatness. That’s not what Jesus means when he says, “he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him!” Rather, healing is God’s business. Truly seeing is God’s business. That’s what God does.

And God sees us with those same eyes. God doesn’t blink, doesn’t flinch, doesn’t look away. God isn’t afraid of who we are – our brokenness, our sin, our pain. God sees a beloved child in each one of us. Most of us know that, at least with our heads. But if there is even one person here today wondering if you can believe that with your heart, then I need you to hear me right now. Focus your Reticular Activating System on the truth of the Gospel: Do you understand that you are not a theological specimen, and that your life is not an experiment in some cosmic laboratory? You are created in God’s image! You are sacred. You are precious. You are a gift to the world. God sees the very best in all of us and wants the very best for each of us. And when the worst in us comes out, God is still ready to forgive. And when the worst in life hits us, God walks with us, even if we can’t see it.

God also invites us to see with our hearts – to see what God sees when he looks at the world. I never cease to be moved by how Jesus responds here. This poor guy is just minding his own business. He’s not crying out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” He’s just sitting there hoping for a few shekels when some stranger walks up to him, spits on the ground, spreads mud on his eyes, commands him to go wash in the pool at Siloam, and then disappears at the end of verse 7, not to reappear again until verse 35. But you and I are learning to see him, to hear his story.

Over and over again, he tries to explain: This is who I am. This is what happened! But the Pharisees never see past a violation of sabbath law. Ironically,

Too bad the Pharisees never do. The bone of contention isn’t whether one should honor the Sabbath, but how. The issue is the healing. The Pharisees designate healing as work, and therefore, a violation of the Sabbath. Jesus declares healing to be an act of worship through which God’s glory is revealed, and therefore, a way of honoring the Sabbath.

As you and I read along, it’s vital that we learn to see like Jesus – to see our own worth and value; to see the sacred preciousness of others; to see how we honor God by opening ourselves to be channels for God’s glory. In our book study last week, Tom Berlin offered a powerful statement. He wrote, “Jesus’ purpose is not just to fill heaven one person at a time; it is also to change the life that will change the town that will change the community, so the world will become better here and now.” [from *Restored: Finding Redemption In Our Mess* by Tom Berlin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016) pg. 53.]. That’s really just another way of stating the mission of the United Methodist Church: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We change the world when we let God heal our vision, change our outlook, lift our perceptions higher.

I love to tell the story about my dad's mother, who, in the mid-1950s, found herself with more time on her hands once my dad and my aunt were out on their own. So my grandmother began volunteer work typing manuscripts for the local school for the blind. She had a typewriter—one of those old manual typewriters—that would type out raised Braille letters. And for 30 years, she used that typewriter to translate classic literature, devotional materials, textbooks—whatever they gave her—into Braille.

But in 1987, the school for the blind gave grandma a computer to type up the stuff on, with a printer attached that would print in Braille. She hated that computer. She didn't have too much trouble learning *how* to use it, but she didn't *like* it! The keys on the keyboard were too easy to push and it was flat instead of in tiers like her manual typewriter. We laugh at that now, and we forget what it was like when computers were first being introduced. So we said to her "Grandma, if you don't like it, don't use it! Use your typewriter." She was only a volunteer, after all, so what's the big deal.

But she knew it was a big deal. She knew that if she typed it into the computer, she could save it. She could type it once and print ten copies, or twenty, or fifty, if that's what was needed—she could help ten people, or twenty, or fifty, instead of one. My grandmother went on to glory in 1995, but for all I know, they may still be printing out things she typed. She said to me, "Amy, always do what will best serve the Lord...not yourself."

What could I say to that? You go, grandma! The last seven years of her life, she typed Braille on a computer she hated! Maybe she wasn't comfortable, but she had reached a point in her life where she was able to see that computer for what it was: a blessing – one that would challenge her, yes, but also empower her to fulfill one of humanity's deepest longings – to make a difference in the world.

Are your challenges blessings in disguise? Are you more ready to serve the Lord than to be comfortable? Are you aware of the ways God may be trying to work good through you? Can you see what God sees – our preciousness, human worth, all the possibilities – when you look at the world.

Let's bring this home. As our blind man regains his sight, he also gains vision and insight. We watch his transformation unfold. In vs. 11, he reports that "the man called Jesus" healed him. By vs. 17, the man declares Jesus to be a prophet. And by vs. 33, our former blind man realizes "if this man were not from God, he could do nothing!" Meanwhile, the Pharisees become more and more short-sighted. And yet, the more they focus on the violation, the more the healed man insists on the validity of his experience. All I know is: I was blind and now I see. Ultimately, the man with sight assumes the role of teacher and evangelist: Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes! And they drive him out.

And that is where we meet Jesus again. Once more, Jesus thrusts himself into this man's experience, this time, to disclose his identity. Only then is the miracle complete. In a sense, the blind man, though miraculously healed, can get no further until revelation occurs. And when the man who now sees understands and accepts that Jesus is the Anointed One of God, he worships.

Step by step, he has come to understand that Jesus is not just a man, not just a prophet, not just sent from God. He is God. How does he know? Because through Jesus, he has personally encountered the glory of God revealed in his experience of healing. In the person of Jesus Christ, we come face to face with the Lord of life. We know God because he chose to thrust himself into our existence. Still today, Jesus wants to thrust himself into my life and into your lives, too. He still wants to show me that asking who is a sinner and who is not is a futile question. We're all sinners. But we are all beloved, too. Jesus still wants to hone our Reticular Activating System – to enlighten us, to heal us, to channel God's grace and glory through us. Jesus still wants us to encounter him in our daily life and to come to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he is the healer of all creation who loves us, who works in us, who lived and died, not just to save us, but to redeem the world. Do you see? Amen.