

# SEQUOYAH HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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November 15, 2020

## *God, Give Us Eyes To See* *John 9:1-21,24-41*

Good morning! It's so good to see all of you! What a year we have had! The elections, racial tensions, protests and riots. The virus closed churches, schools, businesses, sports, travel, and even family gatherings. So many are unemployed, while others grieve and still others suffer. Yet, in the midst of all that, we had our fifth grandchild and Jay celebrated his first year anniversary! He and the staff, along with the elders and deacons, have done an incredible job during these difficult times. So we grieve with those who grieve, and rejoice with those who rejoice, as we long for the day when we can return to some degree of normalcy. Thank you for the invitation to come back.

Jay asked if I'd be willing to preach in the current series, "*Signs and Wonders.*" I've never preached on this text, so what I'm saying is that if the sermon goes south, blame Jay! It's a story about the healing of a blind man, and it gets 41 verses. That's a lot when you consider the crucifixion only got 21! So what happened here that deserves so much attention?

*As he walked along, he 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 work the works of him who sent me while it is day; 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). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.*

*<sup>8</sup>The 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 like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.'<sup>10</sup>But they kept*

asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' <sup>11</sup>He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight.' <sup>12</sup>They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'

<sup>13</sup> 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>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 whether 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, and 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> Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' <sup>36</sup>He 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>He said, 'Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.'

<sup>39</sup>Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' <sup>40</sup>Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

This is more about the human response around the miracle than the miracle itself. The details of the healing are relatively simple. Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud, puts it on the blind man's eyes, and tells him to go wash it off. That's it. No long prayers or sermons, just spit, mud and water. But watch the characters in the story.

- The **disciples** ask, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (9:2) We always ask, "Why?" Why did this happen, or that happen? But we don't get answers, and neither did they. He's blind! That's what we've got to deal with.
- The **neighbors** asked among themselves, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" (9:8b) And they asked him, "How were your eyes open?" (9:10). We also want to know how. How is God going to do this, or do that? But there are a lot of mysteries in this world we can't explain. We don't know how.
- The **Pharisees** asked, "How can a man who is a sinner (speaking of Jesus) perform such signs?" (9:16b) They want to know *who* did this. And to discredit Jesus, they questioned if the man was ever actually blind. It says, "The Jews did not believe he had been born blind..." (9:18a). So they asked his **parents**, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" (9:19). Maybe it's all a hoax! We often try to explain away what we don't understand.
- Then they go back to the man who was once blind. (And don't you find it interesting, that with all this detail, we don't even get his name?) We'll call him **Frank!** They ask Frank a second time, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" (9:26) And Frank sarcastically asks, "Why do you keep asking me? Do you want to be his disciple?" (9:27). Not hardly.
- When **Jesus** finds out about all this, he doesn't go to the disciples, or to the neighbors, or to the Pharisees. He goes and finds Frank to ask him; "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Seems an odd question at this stage of the game. Shouldn't he have asked him that before he healed him? If you believe, you get healed.
- So here's the kicker. **Frank** asks, "And who is he, sir?" (9:36a) He doesn't even know who healed him! That messes up a lot of our theology! No prayer? No belief? No pledge card? (Don't get any ideas!). Could God do something in your life, or in someone else's life, before you have any faith? Could God be doing something in the world today without us believing it, or understanding it? Can that happen? You

would hope! Wouldn't it be a relief to know that God is at work in the world without human permission or understanding?

- Jesus makes an odd statement about those who see being blind, and the **Pharisees** ask him, "*Surely we are not blind, are we?*" (9:40). But they are not talking about physical blindness. There are many forms of blindness. *Arrogance* is blind. In our arrogance we don't want to see what God is doing. And arrogance doesn't just show up at 3pm on a Tuesday. It comes in small increments, seemingly harmless at first, and then grows until we are truly blind to it. Good people can be blinded by arrogance. It happens to ministers and politicians. It happens to doctors and lawyers, bankers and business people. It happens to teachers and students. It happens to old and young, male and female, black and white, rich and poor. It's a good question; "*Surely we are not blind, are we?*"

Are we? Can we see what God is doing in this day and in this time? Doesn't *this* world need some of the *mud and spit* of Christ on our eyes? Every political party, every nation, every religion, every social class, every race and gender, needs to be healed of any arrogance that blinds us from seeing what God is doing in our midst. Because we can't see it does not mean it's not happening!

*God, give us eyes to see.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Congregation:  
**Amen**