**WITH JESUS** (Week 7, February 21, 2018)

**Getting to Know Jesus Through the Gospel of John**

**John 9:1-41**

**Background for the Passage** 1. In Ancient cultures, as in some modern cultures, people with major disabilities are marginalized and unable to earn a living for themselves. They often were/are dependent on the generosity and charity of family, friends, and strangers. In first century Israel, the blind were commonly only able to beg on the streets or at the temple to survive. The blind man in John 9:1, most likely was very poor and begging along the road side as Jesus passed by. (Jesus may have pointed out the man or even stopped and spoken to him, but regardless, the attention of Jesus and His disciples is on the man.)

2. In the Jewish culture of the first century, many people believed that most calamities and suffering resulted from sin. Many believed that if you had an illness, a disability, or something was wrong with your physical body, it was a direct result of the sins you had committed. (Or sins that had been committed by parents or children.) God was essentially cursing you because of some great sin you had committed.

3. Since Genesis, we humans have lived in a fallen world. Sin has poisoned all of creation, and bad things just happen sometimes. From natural disasters on a general level, to accidents or random events on a personal level, sin impacts everything and everyone. Of course, there are times when something bad happens because someone sinned and there are direct or indirect consequences, but not every bad happening is a direct punishment from God. (Good behavior is not always rewarded immediately and bad behavior is not always punished in a timely fashion, so…. sometimes the “innocent” can suffer in the short-term.)

4. God may work through our suffering for His glory. Sometimes, God may work through our weakness to demonstrate His strength. God may also use our struggles and sufferings to connect us to others who can help us and walk through the trials with us. We may also be able to help someone else going through troubles or trials as well based on our own experiences.

5. Many times we struggle with “The Unanswerable Why” questions when it comes to our suffering and struggles. (“Why me? Why did this happen? Why is this getting worse? Why is this trial happening?”) God rarely will answer the “why” question, but instead asks that we trust Him through whatever happens. If we can trust God enough to stop asking “why,” we will often discover that God has already been preparing many other answers for us, if we learn to ask…. “Who has God put in my life to help?” “What has God already provided for me?” “Where is God showing up in this trial?” “When/where has God already arranged for people, provision, and power to arrive to help me?”

6. Jesus doesn’t focus on what caused the blindness, but rather goes about healing the man and not being concerned about the past. Jesus is aware of how long this man has waited, and knows that any debate about why the man was blind will just prolong his situation.

7. When Christ was in the world, light also was in the world. Jesus again proclaimed Himself to be “the Light of the world,” and the day was the time for the Messiah to work the mighty deeds of God. (Jn. 9:4-5, Isa. 29:18, 35:5, 42:7) The night would soon come though, when Jesus died. And even though He would rise again, He would ascend into Heaven, and would no longer be physically present and able to work miracles in such a tangible way. (We know that He would send His Holy Spirit to empower His disciples and followers to be able to do miracles and signs in God’s will and God’s timing.)

8. The way Jesus went about healing the blind man in John 9 is unusual. (Not to mention yucky!) The gospel of Mark recorded 2 healings where Jesus used his own saliva to heal, (Mk. 7:30-33, 8:22) but John recorded an even stranger use of Holy spit, as Jesus made a mud pack for the blind man, and applied it to his eyes. This “extra step” in the healing process was to bolster the faith of the blind man, as he needed to demonstrate obedience and go and wash, which also gave him the sense that He was participating in, and blessed through, a Divine healing. The extra step of making the mud and putting it on the eyes of the blind man would have also been considered WORK on the SABBATH, so Jesus was once again going directly against those who had made the day of rest a ton of work.

9. After the blind man was healed by washing in the pool as instructed, he was questioned over and over again about the identity and location of the man who had healed him. As he was still blind when he had interacted with Jesus, he wasn’t able to describe or identify Him. But, as the formerly blind man began to know/see more clearly who Jesus was, the Pharisees became more and more spiritually blind to the truth of Jesus being the Messiah. While sin did not cause the man to be born and remain blind, sin did cause the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees.

10. When faced with the reality of yet another miracle healing on the Sabbath, the Pharisees tried to come up with other explanations. They questioned the formerly blind man intensely, dragged his parents to testify, and desperately tried to discredit Jesus as “evil” for doing WORK and a miraculous healing on the Sabbath.

**Review Questions** 11. (9:1-3) Where were they when Jesus saw the blindman? What was the man doing? Why? What assumption did the disciples make, and why was this understandable? What question did they ask? How did Jesus respond?

12. (9:4-5) What was Jesus talking about? What does He mean by darkness? What analogy did Jesus utilize? What did this convey to the listeners? What does it mean that Jesus is “the Light of the World.”

13. (9:6-7) What did Jesus do? Why did He use spit and mud? What did He do? For what purpose? What did he tell the blind man to do? What happened?

14. (9:8-12) What was the reaction when he came back home? What speculation occurred & theories were put forth? What did the previously blind man say? What was the result?

15. (9:13-16) Why did the neighbors take the formerly blind man to the Pharisees? What did the Pharisees want? What did they ask of the man? How did he respond? What divisions developed among the Pharisees?

16. (9:17-19) What did the Pharisees do next? What was the man’s response to their pointed questions? How did the Pharisees handle the response of the formerly blind man? What tactic did the Pharisees try next? Why call the man’s parents?

17. (9:20-23) What were the “safe” responses that the parents provided? What “risky” responses did they choose not to give? How and why did they shift the blame to their son? Why is this understandable? Why were the parents “on the spot?”

18. (9: 24-27) How/why do the Pharisees take a slightly different angle in this next round of questioning? How does the formerly blind man handle that? What powerful but simple statement does he make in 9:25? What’s the reaction of the Pharisees? How/why does the formerly blind man get a bit snarky?

19. (9:28-30) What accusation do the frustrated Pharisees fling? Why do they bring Moses into it, and why is where Jesus is so vital to them? How does the formerly blind man respond?

20. (9:31-34) What amazing logical argument does he present? What power is demonstrated by giving the blind eyesight? What conclusion does he draw? How do the Pharisees react? Why do they throw him out?

21. (9:35-36) What did Jesus do when He heard what had happened? What question did He ask the formerly blind man? What is meant by “Son of Man?” What was the honest response?

22. (9:37-38) What was the answer that Jesus provided? (According to Brian….) What word did He perhaps emphasize? What did the man’s words and actions indicate?

23. (9:39-41) According to Jesus, why did He enter the world? What did He point out? Who overheard, and how did they respond? How did Jesus finish this discussion with a powerful closing? (9:41)

**So What?** 24. When you have had troubles, trials, hardships or sufferings, have you ever felt that they are a “judgment from God” because of sin? Do you think this way about the troubles/sufferings of others? Why is this a tricky topic?

25. Do you relate to the blind man? Have you been obedient, but still don’t have all of the answers? How can you learn from his simple, but powerful testimony? (9:25b) What did he KNOW, and to what did he TESTIFY?

26. Can you relate to the Pharisees? Have you had a secure position, that you knew very well, and feel it eroding from under your feet? Have you seen those who break the rules seemingly getting away with it? How does that make you feel?

27. How did the formerly blind man grow to know Jesus? How did his faith and understanding grow just in the short time that we read about him? How does this encourage you? How do we grow?