

031923 "I want to see" John 9:1-7 (NIV)

1. Have you ever gotten lost while you were driving? About two decades ago, it hadn't been long since I was in America. I had given a ride to a friend from New Haven to JFK airport, and had to drive back on my own. This was before the time of GPS gadgets. Back then, people carried maps or printed out directions from their computers. Of course, I drove after learning the directions printed from the computer several times. So, I'm supposed to get on Van Wyck express way to catch the I-95N back to New Haven, but somehow, I got lost. Somehow, I ended up in Long Island. So there I was circling around who knows where until finally a sign comes up saying, "New Haven"! Never have I loved a road sign so much! I'm sure I'm not the only person in this room with this kind of experience. Of course, it is not a love of the literal road sign. It's not about the aesthetic pleasures and beauty of the road sign. We are loving the content of the road sign, we are loving the direction or the destination the sign is pointing us towards.

There are seven miraculous events recorded in the Gospel of John. Today's event is the sixth of these seven. John does not use the word "miracle" in his depiction of these events, instead he uses the Greek word [semeion] which can be translated as "sign". John is directing our eyes past the miraculousness of the event, over the literal event that can be witness with the physical eye. He is directing us to the core function of the event. He is asking us to look towards the destination, not the road sign! Today's passage is imploring us to live lives that are not simply about asking for miracles and obsessing over being granted our small miraculous events. We must look beyond these signs towards the destination, knowing we can reach it only through submitting to the word of God.

2. The blind man in our scripture today had been born as such. Neverminded seeing himself, the man could not see anybody, he could see nothing at all. He had to depend on his touch and aural senses to reach into other people's stories, their lives, maybe as blurry as he could manage. And then he met Jesus. And Jesus spat on the earth, picked up the fresh mud, spread it upon the man's eyes and commanded him to wash it off in the Pool of Siloam (which means Sent).

Let's have a look at this story from the blind man's perspective. He is blind, how easy was it for him to find and walk towards this specific pool? And I thought it would be nice if Jesus could heal this blind man just right there, but for some reason, Jesus told this man to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. Many thoughts could have crossed his mind, "This is crazy, what I'm doing. Seriously, would anything change because of this? Know what, I'm through with this." He must have heard voices of doubt in his head, he might have stumbled countless times as he made his way to the Pond. However, the scripture records the man submitted to Jesus' commands, made his way to the Pond, washed his eyes with the water and could see.

Very often we focus on the wrong things. Instead of focusing on the act of submission to God's words, we wonder about the mud created with spit – perhaps there was some magical elements in the spit, or the dirt? Or maybe the Pond was endowed with some healing power, let's go get that water, that is where we will find our solutions? This kind of misled faith is not uncommon. We see it in crowds of people who are still obsessed with finding the holy grail that Jesus used during the Last Supper. The power of our God never resides within a holy object. We must remember God's miracles occur only when we love God and obey God's words.

Lucky for our blind man, he obeyed and experienced the power of the grace of God. Unfortunately, the joy of being able to see was not shared with all. Since this miraculous act of healing happened on the Sabbath, some Jews find it problematic and challenged Jesus for having violated the Sabbath. The Jewish community was completely obsessed with the debate around whether Jesus was a sinner or not.

For a man who has suddenly been granted sight for the first time in his life, whether Jesus sinned or not is not important. Religious thinkers might find this question interesting, but for this man whose eyes were miraculously opened, his spiritual eyes were opened too. He saw Jesus was a prophet, a man who was in direct communication with God. Undoubtedly ironic, is it not? Those whose vision was as clear as day since their birth cannot see

Jesus for who He truly is, and the man who is seeing the world for the first time ever is able to confess who Jesus is.

3. People once pitied a woman who was born blind and she completely countered to what you would expect somebody who was blind to say. She said boldly that if she had had the choice, she wouldn't desire to have her sight. How on earth is someone able to say something like this? That is so counter to our culture and to our feelings and to our desires. This woman was named Fanny Crosby and she is a woman of God. Fanny was born in 1820 and she was born with sight but when she was about six weeks old, she got sick and a doctor gave her improper medical treatment and that left her blind at just six weeks old and that lasted for the rest of her life. This is the kind of situation that people would say, "oh she deserves to be angry at God" or "I would totally understand if she never set foot in a church again" but her response was totally counter-cultural to what anybody would say.

Her life was totally what Romans 12:2 says about how we should live, how we should respond to things no matter what happens in our lives. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect." Fanny was not conformed to the mold of this world. Instead, she was molded by the holy spirit who conformed her more and more to the image of Christ.

And that mold is very different than the mold of the world. Fanny not only loved the Lord more than she loved her sight but she trusted the Lord's will for her life more than her own will for her life. She trusted him that he was good that he loved her that he is the Lord and sovereign over her life even when he allows trials to happen to us. She trusted in him and she loved him anyway. She even said, this is such a good quote, it was going to be an honor for her in heaven to have Jesus' face be the first face that she ever saw and that just makes me so encouraged.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, I hope and pray that today's sermon helps you see your priorities are in alignment right like heaven is about Jesus and seeing him face to face. Fanny's priorities were straight in that she wanted to see God and see him as the first face she ever

saw like that was what was most important to her not just being able to see again but seeing God and being with God spending eternity with him. Fairfield Grace, May God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.