

Fourth Sunday in Lent  
March 26, 2017

Text: John 9:1-41

Theme: “Just a Little Mud”

Here’s mud in your eye! That’s toast of sorts. I don’t think one is actually asking for harm. Mud, even a little in your eye, would not be a good thing. Our text today deals with a little mud and if not in the eye, then on the eye. Jesus made mud by spitting on the ground and then does quit a marvel with that mud. You would have thought Jesus had done a very evil thing from the ruckus that results. It was a great thing, an unheard of thing. Sight was given to a man who had never seen before.

Again, just a little mud. “[Jesus] spat on the ground and made mud.” (vs 6) I’m not going to spit, but that would not be a very big volume of liquid. I read that the salivary glands produce 2 to 4 pints of produce a day. But that whole load doesn’t come at once. How much liquid could that have been—1/4 oz., maybe 10 ccs? Here, I have just a little liquid here and a little dirt, so now I have a little mud. That little mud made an unbelievable difference.

What a change there was for the man on this day. He began his day at his usual spot, probably a favorite spot where he could sit and beg. He would not have seen Jesus and His disciples as they approached. He had never laid eyes on anyone. His had been a world of darkness, always. It was all that he could remember. He was about to see everything in a whole new light.

Jesus and His disciples see that man who can’t see them. The disciples also often had sight issues. They were quite nearsighted when it come to the work of the Messiah. They, like most, were looking for a Christ who would make this present life a whole lot better—

times of plenty and peace and security. What they expressed about the blind man could likely have been a prevailing attitude. It was a blind spot of understanding. They just have to ask upon seeing the man, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” They thought maybe God had blinded the man as a direct response to a particular sin. Maybe his father had stolen so they could have a better cradle for their arriving baby, and zap, the child conceived is blind. Or it could be that mother had committed adultery, no one know, after all she was already pregnant, but no, not getting away with it, bam! blindness upon soon to be born child. Jesus opens their eyes, no, that’s not the way it is,’ It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (vs 5) And displayed they certainly will be!

So they stop where the man is. Jesus spits, makes mud, puts in on the man’s eyes, and says, “go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” We are not told that man knew what was going to happen. Probably he would not mind going to wash, after all, there was a little mud to be removed. So off he goes and he comes back, comes back but not the same. He comes back seeing! Can you imagine that! The blindness is washed away with the mud.

The formerly blind man is seen by many eyes. Most can’t believe their eyes to see the blind man seeing. They are puzzled. “Is this the same man?” Some say, “yes,” it is. Others say. ‘How can this be? This man sees!’ No, this is just someone looks like him, actually, looks just like him!’ The man himself speaks up, “I am [the man].” (vs 9) Now comes the first “how.” “Then how were your eyes opened?” (vs 10) The man explains that it was the man named Jesus. ‘He made mud, put it on my eyes, sent me to Siloam, wash, and now I see.’ They are not convinced with the truth. The investigation is just beginning.

It is a big stir from such a little bit of mud. The man is taken to the Pharisees. They will surely get to the bottom of this. Since it was the Sabbath and Jesus had made mud, most likely they would have an interest. Turns out they really did. They ask the how of the man. They get the same answer about the mud and the washing and then the seeing. Some point out that this Jesus could not be from God as he done this deed on the Sabbath. But there was a division, others asked how a sinner could do such great signs? (vs 16) The man is asked. Since it's your eyes, "What do you have to say about him?" (vs 17) "He is a prophet," (vs 9) is the answer.

But this just can't be right—a little water, a little mud—nay, there has to be more to this. Maybe this man has been faking, not really blind. We'll ask the parents. They can shed some light on this muddy issue. "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" (vs 19) 'Yes, he is our son, and he was indeed born blind—he certainly was blind when he left the house this morning—how he sees, and who is responsible, certainly we didn't have anything to do with it. Ask him, he's old enough to speak for himself.' His parents didn't want to caught up in any of this muck about Jesus. This controversy about the spit was getting deeper and deeper, you would think it were a river instead of a little spit.

And now it's time for some more mud, mud on the man, and it will be more than a little. 'Okay, you were blind, now you see, we get that [as unbelievable as it is], but this Jesus, he's a sinner, has to be, now give glory to God.' 'A sinner? I don't know about that. Here is what I do know for a fact, I was blind, but now I see.' 'So tell us again what he did. You must be leaving something out. Maybe you have forgotten the part where he calls upon the prince of demons.' 'I told you already, told you about the mud, the washing, and the seeing. Do you have a hearing problem? Now you want me to tell it again. Do you

ALSO want to become His disciples? ‘Now see here, you are his disciple, we’ll stick with Moses. God spoke to Moses. This mud maker, who knows where he’s from!’ ‘Really, now, really, tell me you really don’t know where he is from! He opened my eyes, me, blind from birth. Now one has every done anything like this. Don’t know where he’s from? Are you too blind to see, if he were not from God [a little Nicodemus like here], he could do nothing!’

Now the mud flies. ‘You were born in utter sin, why do you think you were born blind? And now you, dirty stinky sinner that you are, you would teach us with that sin drenched tongue of yours!’ And they cast him out. A little spit and a little dirt, mixed to a little mud and now look what it has resulted in!

So how do we relate to this man! Oh to relate to him by being bold to speak up the truth of Jesus! Like him we were blind, blind from birth, from birth, from conception, we didn’t have the eyes to see Jesus. Is it because our parents sinned? In one way, yes it was. The mud of sin is a big deal. It does go all the way back to the garden. Since that time we have a mud bent to us, every inclination of the heart is continually evil from youth. We can’t decide to start seeing any more than that blind man did. It only comes with the call of Jesus.

No one is as blind as he who will not see. A big part of the Pharisees who saw the blind man are utterly in the dark about Jesus and about themselves. Some of them are within earshot of Jesus at the end of our text. They ask Jesus, “Are we also blind?” (vs 40) Jesus tells them because they think they can see they are indeed in the dark. The way they dealt with the man pointed to their blindness. Their guilt remained. Why would it not—they never sought forgiveness.

God longs to bring sight. In our lesson from Isaiah 42 He tells us He is about to cry out that His work may be done. “For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor...I will lead the blind in way they do not know, in paths they have not known I will guide them.” (Isaiah 42:14, 16) God says He has been crying out to a blind and deaf nations, those who rejected the words of the prophets again and again. They would finally be sent into exile, but the light of the promise did continue to shine. God would more than cry out about it. He comes in person to redeem.

The Chosen Servant (42:1) comes for the blind and the deaf. He would run into more blindness. The Pharisees were wearing the blinders of the tradition of the fathers and the Sadducees were often blinded by desire to retain their positions of privilege. Jesus walks in perfect light doing always the deeds of light, such as opening the eyes of the blind man. He takes all the darkness of our sin upon Himself and faces the blazing justice of God.

We are given eyes so we may see, see the Christ, the crucified, risen, and reigning Christ. The man will experience another eye opening event. Jesus asks him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (vs 35) He answers, “Who is he?” “You have seen him, and it he who is speaking to you.” (vs 37) He responds, “Lord, I believe.” (vs 36) He has progressed to seeing Jesus as a prophet (vs 17), from God (vs 33), and now the Messiah!

So what do the mud and the water mean to us? We see Jesus power, the stubborn unbelief of the Pharisees, and the boldness of the seeing man. We too see only because of our Lord’s miracle. It is a bit of a stretch but we can see the application of the law a bit like mud in the eye that makes us aware of the seriousness of our problem. It is followed by they washing of the Gospel. Our blindness from sin is washed away. The Gospel

words continue to wash over us. We have the washing of the Word in the waters of Baptism. It could be a little water, or it could be a lot, but it's a big deal washing, the biggest for it is the washing of God's promises.

We, like the blind man, can now declare the praises of the One who has called us from the darkness into His marvelous light. We are called, empowered, to walk as those who see. "For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light." (Ephesians 5:8)

We have a little mud, better than mud, the divine ointment of God's Word so we may see. Now, brothers and sisters, we go walking in the light, being lights, so others may see the same Lord as we see. For His sake. Amen