



The Nourishing Vocation Project

Engaging the Living Word

John 9

What is this particular text?

- Healing story
- Sign, Investigation, Interpretation
- Theology

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Shows Jesus' power
- Shows opposition to Jesus' power
- Healing text – physical, societal, emotional
- One of the seven signs of John's Gospel

How can this text function in the church today?

- What are the ways the church rejects those who don't 'fit'?
- What does the church remain ignorant about?
- Reminder that no person is invisible
- Invitation to think about the ways the church questions Jesus' authority in its actions
- Invitation to gather in those who have been cast out by their communities
- Encourages us to hold fast to Jesus' power, even when earthly authorities question it

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- The phrase "he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him" strikes me as problematic
- I struggle with this passage
- I feel comforted – reminds me that Jesus recognizes my full humanity, even and especially when others don't
- Convicts me – I know there have been times when I haven't shown others the dignity and care they need and deserve

What do you have to say to the text?

- The man never said that he wanted to see, or that he wanted to be healed
- Everyone ignored the blind man – except Jesus
- I'm glad the parents asserted their child is an adult and fully capable of answering for himself
- In the last section of the text, "blind" appears to be a metaphor for "ignorant"

What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Jesus' identity revealed to the most vulnerable
- Physical, communal, and emotional healing
- Reminder that Jesus' authority is subversive
- The more the man tells his story, the more he understands who Jesus is
 - The man called Jesus (v. 11)



- Prophet (v. 17)
- I don't know that he is a sinner (v.24)
- One who worships and obeys God (v.31)
- From God (v.33)
- The more he tells is story, it becomes more about Jesus and less about him

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- Ableist language and theology
- Assumption that blind people need or want healing
- The instinct to drive out people who are disabled, neurodivergent, mentally ill, different
- Disability theology
- Disabled people are *begging* for adequate healthcare, adequate accessibility, adequate inclusion; and they're tired of having to plead for their basic needs to be met
- Crises of today:
 - Ableist society
 - Healthcare
 - Institutions thinking they know people's experiences better than people themselves

What do you see within yourself?

- Times when I have been ignorant
- Times when I have been cast out of communities or have seen queer and trans beloveds cast out
- Fear of being cast out

What is the context – textual and historical?

- Follows a passage where Jesus has to defend his divine, cosmic identity
- Precedes the "Jesus the good shepherd" passage, which emphasizes his identity
 - The "Good Shepherd" narrative interprets this sign
- Follows the Gospel of John pattern of sign, misunderstanding, interpretation

What questions does this text raise for you?

- This man was born blind. Was gaining sight overwhelming for him?
- Did the man want to see?
- Once the man gained his sight, did he discover he preferred being blind?
- Why did Jesus' disciples assume that this man was blind because someone in his family sinned?
- Where is the blind man's agency?
- Who does our society ignore?
- How does the blind man get to the pool of Siloam? Does he already know the path? Does someone guide him?
- Is "blind" the best translation in verses 39-41?
 - What if it were translated as "ignorant?"
- What was the man's reaction when Jesus found him after he'd been cast out?

What words/themes seem of particular importance?

- Blindness
- Mud
- Sight
- Sin



- Driving out

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- Nobody is invisible to Jesus
- Jesus draws near to those society casts out
- Jesus sees when others do not
- Sight is much more than eyesight

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- The blindness/sight language can become a false binary if we're not careful
- Healing is not the same as cure
- Following Jesus sometimes means losing the trust of authorities
- Seeing isn't always believing
- Not being able to see is not always physical
- Sometimes we think we see when we truly do not see at all

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- Jesus pays attention to those who are ignored
- Jesus heals
- Jesus intentionally seeks out those who have been cast out of their communities
- Jesus has authority
- Jesus uses the authority he has to care for the most marginalized

What have others said about this text?

- [“The sad irony is that](#) Jesus has made it clear that sin was not the issue, but the religious leaders have insistently concluded that now that he sees and claims Jesus as being from God, he is born entirely in sin. The man, now seeing, is driven out of the religious community, and Jesus meets him again. This second encounter is where the healing happened. Jesus says, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” Jesus reveals to the man that it is Jesus himself. The man says he believes and worships him. Healing texts invite us to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, Word of God, and Son of God who gets his authority from God and leads to eternal life. An encounter with Jesus is deeper than cure. It is healing, redemptive, abundant. It means eternal life. It is healing to know that regardless of systemic barriers, Jesus still finds a way to offer people with disabilities like myself full and abundant lives.” Kyle Stevenson
- [“My brother Bishop, Rev. Craig Satterlee,](#) who is legally blind, points out that people whose eyes work come to believe that what they see with their eyes is all there is to see, therefore what they know is all that is important to know, therefore how they behave is the right way to behave. He, like Jesus in the Gospel of John, has learned to be suspicious of conclusions drawn from “sight.”” Bill Tesch

What will I teach or proclaim?

- Disabled people are not disabled because of sin
 - Saying sin causes disabilities promotes the myth that something is inherently wrong with disabled people
- Not all blind people want to see
- Disabled people don't need to be healed; what they need is accessibility so they can show up as they are



- Jesus recognizes the full humanity of disabled people
 - God values disabled people as they are
- Healing is messy
- Jesus intentionally seeks out those who are cast out of their communities
- Jesus' authority is radical
 - Uses his authority to give power and agency to the most marginalized
- Jesus flips the social order upside down, prioritizing those who are looked down upon, cast out, and undervalued
- The sight that Jesus gives may surprise us
- Those who see may surprise us