

“Washed Clean in Jesus”

John 9:1-41

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of my children’s favorite things to do when they are bored is watch funny animal videos. On occasion, I’ll join in, and the other day we were watching one where a dog had decided they were going to roll around in a giant mud puddle. And of course, the very next thing the dog does is run to its owner and shake off the mud, flinging it in every direction. Mud is a thick, messy thing that only makes one think of the absolute mess they will have to clean up if their dog decides to dive into a pool of it. The only solution—a thorough washing in the tub, a spray down with the hose, and one unhappy dog if you ask mine.

So, why mud? In our Gospel lesson, why did the Lord cover the man’s eyes with a thick, messy goop only to have him wash it away? Well, in ancient times, mud made with spit was a very common medicinal application. But curing blindness? Seems a bit far-fetched, that is, if it were the mud doing the healing of the blind man in our text. Having been covered in the dirt of the ground, Jesus tells the man, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” Last week’s Gospel focused on the living water that flows from the Christ as He brings salvation into the world. And that passage in John 4 should be in mind as this man born blind goes into the water and comes out seeing. It is not the pool that healed him, but he is washed clean in Jesus.

The mud with which his eyes had been covered was a reminder of the reality of his sinful nature that needed to be cleaned. And not just his, but that of the disciples and all who witnessed this great miracle from the Lord—and yours. “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents.” All are sinners before the righteous judge, but he does not plague man with ailments as a punishment for their sins. These things are the reality of original sin. As those who bear the sinful flesh, all mankind is subject to the result of the sin of Adam. It cannot be escaped by the man born blind, and you cannot escape it either. Every person is depraved by nature, and because of that depravity, you cannot save yourself from its consequences.

The Old Adam seeks to disrupt your faith at every turn, bringing you into sin after sin as he seeks the destruction of your faith. He cannot thrive within you when confronted with the truth of Christ’s forgiveness for you, and so he tries with all his might to make you believe that your sins are too great, or that you haven’t done enough to earn the gift that Jesus won for the world at the cross. And he isn’t wrong about those

accusations. You are not worthy of God's forgiveness on your own. You cannot do enough to earn His forgiveness. You are utterly sinful in every respect and no one is excluded from that reality. Only the sinless Son of God was able to be perfect, and no matter how many so-called teachers in the world seek to say otherwise, you cannot achieve perfection. Not even Moses was perfect, and yet the Pharisees proclaim themselves to be disciples of Moses as if He is on the same level as God. David, in Psalm 51:3-5, makes it clear that there is no escaping the reality of who we are in the flesh:

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment. Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

That is why we confess our sins before our God the way in which we do. You do not simply say that you are sorry and move on. As those who are in the faith, you acknowledge the truth of who you are outside of Christ. You are a poor, miserable sinner who justly deserves God's temporal and eternal punishment. Sin pervades every aspect of your lives because it pervades every aspect of this world. Even God's church on earth is not exempt from sin's reach. That is evident in the fact that Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden, and in the troubles of churches around the world. The devil is at work constantly to pull the people of God as far from their Creator as possible. He pollutes teaching, causes divisions, and seeks the demise of the Lord's holy people by any means necessary. His attacks are fierce, and if left to face them alone in the sinful flesh, the devil wins every time, and you are left in despair and hopelessness.

But, as I often say, you are not alone. There is no you outside of Christ any longer as one who is in the faith. Christ dwells here among His people, and He dwells within you as one who has been washed clean in Him. Your sinful flesh cannot win the victory, because Jesus has already declared victory over it at Calvary. He has already defeated sin and the devil, so the evil one's lies and flaming darts will find no shelter here. Sin will undoubtedly continue to find you in every aspect of your life. That is the lot of every man, woman, and child as you walk in this world of sin. But just like the blind man, there is hope. Jesus Christ, the light of the world, has uncovered your eyes and shown you His mercy. You are not lost to sin because He has told you, "Go, wash yourself in Siloam."

John, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, does us a great favor by telling us that Siloam means Sent. More specifically, the Greek indicates that it not only means "sent,"

but “the sent one.” When the Lord, Jesus, tells the blind man to go wash in Siloam, He tells Him to go and wash in “the Sent One.” In John 5:36-37, Jesus says, “For the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about Me that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me has Himself borne witness about Me.” Jesus is the Sent One. He says as much in this John 5 passage, and He says it at the beginning of our Gospel lesson. “We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day.” Jesus was telling the man to wash in Him. He was telling Him to be washed in the blood of the Lamb as he washed the mud from His eyes.

Jesus was calling the man to faith in Him. In removing the mud from his eyes and opening them to the truth, Christ was giving him forgiveness, life, and salvation. He was opening his eyes to the reality that in his sinful nature he needs the salvation offered only through the Son of God. He was not only physically blind, but spiritually blind, just as Jesus accuses the Pharisees in verses 39-41. He needed the work of the Father through the Son in order to receive the sight he needed to be saved. His eyes were opened to who he is before his Father in heaven. He is a poor, miserable sinner who is by nature sinful and unclean. And the Lord opened His eyes to the truth of his redemption in the Sent One. He washed his robes in the righteousness of the Son, and the victory of the Lamb who was slain is his by faith.

By washing in the Water (Jesus) and the Word (Jesus), the blind man was healed—given sight that had never been his. But the sight he received was not just a mere opening of his eyes. He has laid eyes upon the Son of Man and has received the sight of faith. By faith he received the healing that was given to him by Christ, your Lord. In the waters of the Sent One, he was washed clean of the stain of sin that was caked over his eyes. He may have been covered in mud, but now as he has been washed clean in Jesus by faith, he stands justified before the One who sent Jesus into the world to do the works of His Father.

Simple means do great things. A little spit and dirt, some water in a pool, and the Lord performs great miracles before the eyes of the world. In the same way, He gives us simple means to perform great miracles in this place. Not miraculous healings and charismatic silliness, but forgiveness of sins for you poor, miserable sinners. In the washing of water and the Word, you were baptized into the death of Jesus, and have had the stain of original sin removed by His grace. In eating of the body and blood of your Lord, in, with, and under the bread and wine, you are forgiven of all your sins. The mud is cleaned from your eyes, and now you see with the eyes of faith. And those eyes of faith allow you to sing as we did just a moment ago, “Hence, all fear and sadness! For the Lord of gladness, Jesus, enters in. Those who love the Father, Though the storms may

gather, Still have peace within. Yea, whate'er I here must bear, Thou art still my purest Pleasure, Jesus, priceless Treasure!"

Jesus is indeed our treasure and the greatest gift that God comes here to bring. No matter the struggles and storms of this life, as the one body of Christ, He is given to you according to your place as a son of God. You have been called into the sonship of your Heavenly Father, and the eternal inheritance of Christ is yours as well. According to His promise, He strengthens you by His means of grace to keep you in the faith of the Sent One, to give you the hope and assurance of eternal life. He has indeed washed you clean in Jesus, who gave Himself up to death on the cross to fulfill God's promise. His atoning blood gives life to all who believe in Him, and by that sacrifice you are declared to be holy in the sight of your Father. The heavenly promises still await, but night is coming when the work of the Lord will be complete. The works of faith which you do in this life will one day come to an end, and you will no longer need to be washed clean of your sin. Sin will be no more as you dwell in the perfection of Christ's presence, and on that glorious day, you will be united with the whole host of heaven, rejoicing in the light of Jesus for all eternity. Amen.