

The gospel of John is the life story of Jesus purportedly written by the Apostle John. It's most likely the last of the four gospels in the Bible in terms of when it was written. This conclusion comes from language/vocabulary choices as well as the opinion that the theological reflection in John is much more developed and mature than in Mark, Luke and Matthew. John's account of Jesus is filled with poetry and paradoxes between light and dark, deafness and hearing, blindness and sight. John tells us his purpose for writing the gospel in 20:31, "But these [stories] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." We jump into the middle of John, in a chapter that is widely considered to be one of the best written, in terms of the metaphors, paradoxes, poetry and humanity of the account.

**BLIND:** While the text is quite poetic, this man is literally blind. It was understood that the Messiah would give sight to the blind (see the note of Messiah on the next page).

**born BLIND:** Sickness or what we'd call a handicap, were seen as the direct consequences of sin. Just as if you were healthy and wealthy it must be because you were loved by God, ergo without sin. These theological beliefs dated back to the scripture of Exodus 20:5 "You shall not bow down to foreign gods or idols or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me.." If this man was born blind, undoubtedly it was because of the sin of his parents or other ancestors.

*world* This is shortly after John has already included the world *world* in 3:16-17 "<sup>16</sup> 'For God so loved the *world* that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the *world* to condemn the world, but in order that the *world* might be saved through him.

**Jesus** we easily forget that the name Jesus in Hebrew means "God (or Yahweh) saves!"

March 10, 2019

John 9:1-12

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man **BLIND** from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born BLIND?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born BLIND so that God's works might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the *world*, I am the light of the *world*." <sup>6</sup> When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made ~~mud~~ with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, <sup>7</sup> saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. <sup>8</sup> The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup> Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup> But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup> He answered, "The man called *Jesus* made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." <sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a *Sabbath day* when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe *the Sabbath*." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. <sup>17</sup> So they said again to the **BLIND** man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

<sup>18</sup> The Jews did not believe that he had been **BLIND** and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup> and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born **BLIND**? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born **BLIND**; <sup>21</sup> but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; HE IS OF AGE. He will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, "He IS OF AGE; ask him."

<sup>24</sup> So *for the second time* they called the man who had been **BLIND**, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was **BLIND**, now I see." <sup>26</sup> They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" <sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. <sup>32</sup> Never since the *world* began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born **BLIND**. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND EXAMEN

- WHAT SHIMMERS FOR YOU IN THIS READING?
- WHO IS THE STORY IS BLIND? SEEING? WHAT DOES BLINDNESS MEAN? SIGHT?
- WHAT INVITATION TO BE, ACT, SPEAK, DO YOU HEAR IN TODAY'S TEXT?

*Sabbath day* the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week on which those that follow Yahweh are commanded to worship God in rest and contemplation. One of the commandments it is justified as active way to remember that God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of creation – that rest is part of creation, life and vocation (Exodus 20:8-11) and also to actively remember that the Israelites were once slaves in Egypt, a regular experiential reminder of what freedom is, costs and implies (Deuteronomy 5:12-18)

**Messiah** is the promised "anointed" One that God would send to liberate, lead and unify the people. Many of the prophetic words spoken of the Messiah to come include references to the blind seeing, to light in darkness, to a new vision: See for example Isaiah 42:

<sup>1</sup> Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

<sup>6</sup> I am the Lord, I have called you in  
righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people, a  
light to the nations,

<sup>7</sup> to open the eyes that are **BLIND**,  
to bring out the prisoners from the  
dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.  
The Lord goes forth like a soldier,  
like a warrior he stirs up his fury;  
he cries out, he shouts aloud,  
he shows himself mighty against his foes.

<sup>14</sup> 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 gasp and pant.

<sup>16</sup> I will lead the **BLIND**  
by a road they do not know,  
by paths they have not known, I will guide  
them.

I will turn the darkness before them into  
light,  
the rough places into level ground.  
These are the things I will do,  
and I will not forsake them.

<sup>18</sup> Listen, you that are deaf;  
and you that are **BLIND**, look up and see!