

The Joy of Suffering for the Glory of God

“Learning Jesus” (The Gospel of John)

John 9:1-41

March 10, 2019

BIG IDEA

There is a whole lot of mental illness, physical misery, grief, and stress in our world. If you are suffering, you can be confident that it is not in vain. Your suffering is meant to bring glory to God. I want to encourage you that when you walk with Jesus through the deepest pains in life, people will notice, and they'll be attracted to Jesus. Meanwhile, you'll be getting to know the Lord better. Please know that you can find deep joy, even as you suffer for the glory of God.

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Context:

This is the sixth of seven signs that Jesus did in order to prove that He is who He said He is.

The Seven Signs

- Changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana ([Jn. 2:1-11](#))
- Healing the royal official's son ([Jn. 4:46-54](#))
- Healing the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem ([Jn. 5:1-15](#))
- Feeding the 5,000 ([Jn. 6:5-13](#))
- Walking on water ([Jn. 6:16-21](#))
- *Healing the man born blind* ([Jn. 9:1-7](#))
- Raising Lazarus from the dead ([Jn. 11:1-44](#))

While we won't study this entire chapter, the gist of the story is this:

- Jesus passed by a man who'd been blind from birth – and the fact that the man had always been blind is important to the story.
- The disciples were under the impression that there must have been some sin that caused this blindness either on his part or on the part of his parents.

- Jesus debunked that theory and healed the man by covering his eyes with mud and commanding him to wash in the pool of Siloam.
- The Pharisees (the Jewish leaders) were angry that Jesus did this healing on the Sabbath.
- They accused Jesus of being a sinner because He didn't keep the Sabbath.
- The blind man believed that Jesus was a prophet and, in fact, when meeting Jesus again in the temple, he fully believed in and worshipped the Lord.
- But the Pharisees remained spiritually blind, and Jesus ended the passage with the most terrible of all phrases: "Your guilt remains."

The miracle itself is a sure sign that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. He is a compassionate healer that is intent on bringing people into a saving relationship with God.

John 9:1-7

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

DISCUSSION & APPLICATION

1. Suffering In the Life of a Believer Glorifies God

John 9:1-3 – *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

The choice that Jesus made to stop and heal this man is significant. He is sovereign. He also has great compassion. In that culture blindness would render the man helpless. It also illustrates man's spiritual blindness from birth. This man was born with a need for someone to heal him. We are born in sin and with a need for someone to save us! Jesus is that person. The disciples wrongly assumed that sin had caused this man's condition. In truth, he was blind so that Jesus could heal him and bring glory to His Father.



- a. **Can you describe a time when you prayed that you or someone else would be healed?**

- b. **What thoughts ran through your mind as you waited on God? Did you doubt the goodness of God?**

- c. **After reading these verses, why do you think God may have answered your prayer differently?**

2. Suffering Lies Within the Providence of a Sovereign God

Isaiah 45:5-7 – *I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.*

It's easy to ask the "why" question when you're suffering. Why me? Why now? Why so much? The answer is: Your suffering glorifies God. The man was born blind for a purpose. God didn't just allow it, and God didn't just put up with it. God made this man perfectly in the womb, and blindness was part of the product. It was to glorify Himself.

- a. **Describe how you feel when you see that God brings suffering in order to glorify Himself. Is that fair?**

- b. **How does suffering help us connect to Christ and others?**



- c. Are you willing to suffer if it furthers the cause of the Kingdom?

3. Accept the Truth That is Revealed Through Suffering

John 9:4-5 – *We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

The “signs” that Jesus did point to His Lordship. The religious leaders failed to believe, so “darkness” would fall up on them through their continued rejection. It’s foolishness to turn our eyes away from Christ in the midst of suffering. Instead, we can deepen our relationship with Him by acknowledging His sovereignty during hard times. This is what it means to suffer for the glory of God.

- a. Do you think it’s harder to walk with God in suffering or in prosperity? Why is it so easy to lose our faith when we’re suffering?

- b. **1 Peter 1:6-7** tells us that suffering grows our faith. Have you found this to be true?

1 Peter 1:6-7 – *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

- c. Do you think that Christians, many times, suffer in isolation? Why? What can you do to help someone walk through suffering?



4. Suffering Leads to Restoration

John 9:6-7 – *Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.*

There was no medicine in the mud. It was probably used by Jesus to develop the man's faith. The man's pain would be washed away in the gentle waters of the pool named "Sent." The Sent One had healed him. Are you suffering? Then come to the Sent One to be healed. There is restoration in suffering because that's what Jesus does. The Lord heals and restores those who come to Him.

a. Jesus is faithful to restore those that believe in Him. Can you describe what physical restoration might look like for a new believer? What does spiritual restoration look like?

b. Have you been spiritually healed by Jesus? How does your life compare with what it used to be?

c. When we suffer for God's glory we become better acquainted with Jesus, are comforted by His love, and others notice. What suffering exists in your life right now? Take a moment and pray that God would use your suffering to glorify Himself and deepen your love for Him.

PRAY

Dear Lord, suffering hurts. I feel torn apart. I am afraid. Sometimes I get angry. Sometimes I don't understand. But teach me to trust you. Teach me to allow you to glorify yourself through me. Amen.



DIG DEEPER

For further study this week:

- [*Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering*](#) – a book from Timothy Keller
- [*Suffering: Gospel Hope When Life Doesn't Make Sense*](#) – a book from Paul David Tripp

NEXT WEEK'S BIG IDEA

Seven Signs Point to Jesus as Son of God; Sign #7 – *The Raising of Lazarus* (John 11:1-44)

