

GRACE AND PEACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grace and Peace Home Worship Guide for September 6, 2020

Opening Prayer

Call to Worship

Psalm 73:25-28

Song¹

“Here I Am To Worship”

Scripture

John 9:1-17

Sermon²

“I Can See!”
Pastor Jonathan

Prayer

Giving³

Song

“Mighty To Save”

Benediction

Ephesians 3:20-21

¹ Lyrics are provided in this PDF.

² A full transcript of the sermon is provided in this PDF.

³ You can give online through our website, our church app, or by mail.

Here I Am To Worship

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes let me see
Beauty that made
This heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You

CHORUS:

So here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God
And You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

King of all days
Oh so highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly You came
To the earth You created
All for love's sake became poor

CHORUS

And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross
And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross

CHORUS 2x

Mighty To Save

Everyone needs compassion
Love that's never failing
Let mercy fall on me
Everyone needs forgiveness
The kindness of a Savior
The hope of nations

CHORUS:

Savior, He can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save
He is mighty to save
Forever Author of salvation
He rose and conquered the grave
Jesus conquered the grave

So take me as You find me
All my fears and failures
Fill my life again
I give my life to follow
Everything I believe in
Now I surrender

CHORUS

Shine your light and let the whole world see
We're singing for the glory of the risen King, Jesus
Shine your light and let the whole world see
We're singing for the glory of the risen King

CHORUS 2x

You are mighty to save

GRACE AND PEACE

COMMUNITY CHURCH

September 6, 2020

"I Can See!"

Pastor Jonathan Olsen

John 9:1-17

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

⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰ So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

"Now I see!" From time to time I will mention in the sermon that I have a degenerative eye disease. I wear two contacts in each eye -1 hard contact and one soft contact. There was a time when I only wore hard lenses that I did not take care of whatsoever. In fact I took such bad care of them

that they actually began to get foggy. And so not only did I not see well without them, I actually didn't see very well with them. And they were foggy and they were outdated by way of prescription. My God's grace I realized I really need to take care of my eyes. My eyesight is very important in general and especially for being a pastor, it's important to be able to preach my sermons and look at my notes while I'm doing so. And I realized I need to take care of my eyes, and I got new, clean lenses with an updated prescription. I can remember when I first put them in, I could see color, and I could see details... I could see like I never had before, literally.

And you know the phrase I can see can also refer to "Oh now I get it... now I understand it... I can see!"

And both of those meanings of "I can see" is what we find today in our passage. We come to the story of a man who sees physically for the very first time in his life! But he also has an understanding - he sees in his heart Jesus as the Prophet of God. All because of Jesus' illuminating grace in his life.

By way of outline today we see:

1. *Illumination That's Divine (verses 1-7)*
2. *Illumination That's Defended (verses 8-12)*
3. *Illumination That's Divisive (verses 13-17)*

Here in John chapter nine we come to one of my very favorite stories in the whole Bible. We're going to be studying it the next three weeks. And one of the reasons why it's one of my favorite stories is you see amazing grace - the grace of illumination given to this man who was born blind. But then you also see amazing perseverance by this man. Now Jesus had just told the Jews that before the great father of their faith Abraham was even born he said "I am" - unequivocally saying I am God. And the Jews got it, because they wanted to stone him for this so-called blasphemy. But he snuck out of the temple (the setting of where that conversation was taking place), the holy place of worship for the Jews, in order to avoid death. And what we come to today is what followed that event. First, we see illumination that's divine.

Illumination That's Divine

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

man's eyes with the mud⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

Now after Jesus had left the temple, he would go by someone who was born blind. Now we need to note something here. Jesus could see the man, but the man born blind of course couldn't see Jesus. And this is a picture of you and me and every single person who's born into this world. We are born spiritually blind. We were born spiritually dead the Bible says - all because of our sin within us. We are naturally unable to see Jesus. We can only come to Jesus, seeing him with the eyes of our hearts, seeing him with our very heart of hearts... only *if he first comes to us*, just like he does this man born blind... only if He reveals himself, if his divine illumination of grace comes to us.

Secondly Jesus is not told here that the man is born blind, and he doesn't need to be told that the man is born blind. Jesus (as we studied last week) is the great *I am*. He is God. He knows all things. He perfectly knows this man's situation and story. Jesus as God *has written* this man's story. And in that story, it includes coming to him with illuminating grace.

So Jesus' followers say to him, "Rabbi (master, teacher, leader, the one that we go to get understanding), is this guy blind because of his sin or because his parents' sin?" They're seeking an understanding of cause and effect - what is the cause of the effect of this man's blindness? And they think it's sin.

Now of course it's not wrong to seek cause and effect. But suffering and brokenness in this world is never as simple to understand as we would like. They think it's simply sin... "this is the reason for this man's condition, his blindness." They're connecting the dots of suffering with a direct line to another dot - of sin.

Now it is certainly true in the Bible there are certain dots that are connected as it relates to our sin and certain results of it.

Numbers 14.18b

But he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.'

Galatians 6.7

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

There are indeed severe and monumental consequences to our sins and the sins of others. Sin always has a greater negative impact on us and on others than any of us fully realizes.

But not all human suffering in the world is a direct result of a sin choice. We live in a fallen and broken world because of sin. That's God's curse on sin. God has cursed us and cursed the world because of sin. It might be better to say we cursed ourselves because we've fallen in sin. Now nothing is the way it ought to be. Nothing - no situation, no person - nothing is the way it ought to be. Because of sin, and the broken nature of this life because of it.

Now this guy couldn't have even been born blind because of his sin - unless he sinned in the womb somehow, and *that's* what caused him to be born blind.

But notice something else too when the disciples ask, hey who sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind? Notice there is something that's missing here... and that's God. God is not even in the equation of their curiosity.

It would be good for us to ask ourselves when we think about our suffering and the suffering of other people, do we think merely it is because of the bad sin choice of another person? The bad sinful life choice that we have made or that someone else is made, that we or they suffer?

It certainly can be. We reap what we sow. But that is not our only option for why there is hardship and suffering in the world. Because Jesus says here, "look it wasn't either this man's sin or his parents' sin that caused his blindness. The whole purpose of this man's blindness was so that god's work would be displayed in him." This man has sort of been (and this may sound hard to accept) entrusted with this particular suffering of blindness so that god could show off his grace in him. This man's affliction with blindness was a platform for god's grace. It's so understandably counterintuitive to how we think about suffering. It may be that we even begin to question god's goodness when we think about what jesus is saying here. Suffering and the sovereignty of God God is not an easy thing for finite sinful minds to get our minds around - to say the least it's not easy. And there are many helpful resources out there. (If you'd like some resources about suffering and the sovereignty of God we would love to get those to you. Email me at pastorjon@graceandpeacecommunitychurch.org).

Now maybe you know on paper that your suffering or someone else's is suffering has been purposed by God for his honor. But you struggle because you just don't see *how* God is honored. It is an intolerable suffering seemingly, and you just want it gone. Let me say to you - that is completely understandable. It is understandable to want things whole - the way they ought to be in a perfect world. It's actually evidence that you're an image bearer of God - because you know things ought to be right... and you know when something is off and it's wrong. It all reflects that we've been made by God. And so I want to encourage you to pray to God when there is suffering that seems intolerable. Pray, Lord help me to understand... help me to get what you want me to understand... what are you teaching me through this?

And you are also free to pray for that suffering to be gone. The great early church leader, the Apostle Paul wrote these words in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 –

So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

You know the followers of Jesus in John chapter 9 appeared to have a kind of godless, God-empty, God-void view of suffering. But Paul's view of his own suffering, even when he didn't receive relief from it, was God full. How are your thoughts on suffering, either yours or someone else's? Godless? What does that look like? What does it look like for it to be God-full? How are your thoughts on suffering God-full? What does that mean for how you live in light of it - again whether it's your suffering or someone else's?

And then he goes on to say in verses four and five, look we need to be busy with God's work while it's still day, while I'm still around. Because night is coming when I'm not going to be here any longer. Life as you know it is not going to be forever. We must shine the light of the gospel now. There will be a day when we can no longer get God's good work of the gospel out to others. There will be no more opportunity for people to hear it. So we need to speak it into the darkness of our day, in the racism of our day, in the hatred of our day, and the anger of our day, and the biases of this day, and the injustices of today, the false gods of success, the false god of appearance, the false god of political triumphalism, and the false god of superiority which comes from pride.

We need to speak the good news into those things today, because Jesus says “As long as I'm here I'm the light of the world. I have come so that people can see.” And hundreds of years before Jesus was on the scene as a man, it was prophesied that he would come to do in Isaiah 35.4-6a

Say to those...sing for joy

Say to those who have an anxious heart,

“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God

will come with vengeance,

with the recompense of God.

He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

*⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.*

Jesus has come to reverse the curse of God because of our sin, and to make all things new and right, to bring illuminating grace, making things the way they ought to be - just like we see here with this man. In front of the disciples who could see and this man who could not see, Jesus shows off that he's the great *I am*, the light of the world, the illuminator, as he spits on the ground, turns dust into mud. Many think this is reflective of being recreated in Jesus Christ - we were created out of dust, God breathing life into dust and there was humanity... and Jesus spits on the ground and brings new life as it were to this man. He spits on the ground and makes mud and anoints this man's eyes with that mud, tells him to wash in the pool of Siloam in order to receive sight for the very first time. And because he did it - he went to the pool, he washed it off, and he could see for the very first time in his life! Color... details... people... he could see all because of Jesus' miraculous, illuminating, divine touch of grace.

And this points us to the great illumination of God's grace on a cross. Where Jesus, the sinless man, hung there, being judged by God the Father, the one who sent him into the world, to accomplish the very mission on the cross that he did... dying for the sins of people like you and me... taking on the eternal punishment and judgment of God for people like you and me. He was punished as the innocent God-man, breathing his last, put to death, buried into a tomb. And then three days later he was raised from the grave, and he was triumphant over sin and over death for all eternity, for anyone who will say "I believe in him as my personal Lord and Savior. I believe that he came here for me, and that he lived perfectly for me, and that he died as a substitute for me, and he was buried for me, and he was raised for me, that I might be raised with him forever." This is the good news. And this miracle here of Jesus touching this man's eyes, anointing his eyes with mud, recreating this man by giving him sight... it points to the ultimate healing that Jesus brings to humanity, to the nations of the world, for any individual who will trust in him... an eternal healing with God... sins forgiven forever, because Jesus died and was raised.

That is illumination that's divine. This poor man will now have to defend himself...

Illumination That's Defended

⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰ So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

Now the neighbors were well aware of what was shaking down, and so they asked “Hey is this the neighborhood beggar? It was not easy to get a job in the 1st century to get a job, so you would beg in order to get money, if you didn't have any family, or if your family had cashed you out because you were blind (which sadly did happen). Maybe that was the situation with this man who do you see outside of Wawa, at the gas station, or that man or woman at the end of your street. That's this man.

And as with this man, so to those people outside of Wawa, on the grocery store down your street... well they have a story too. And part of that story is that like this man, they are made in God's image with dignity. How do you think of them? How do you think of this man here? How do you think the disciples thought of him? A beggar you want to avoid? Or an image bearer just like you, who has needs just like you?

Your needs may be covered up a little bit more with money, or education, or sophistication... but you have needs. Just like this beggar.

Now some of the neighbors say, “Hey it's him, it's the neighborhood beggar!” Others say, “No it's not him, but it's someone who's like him.” But he's saying, “Look it is me! I'm that guy!” They say, “Well look OK, if it's you, how did you receive your sight?” And so he testifies, “The man known as Jesus... he made mud, anointed my eyes, he told me to wash, and I did, and now I see!” Now I can see of course the neighbors react - there was a miracle! But they didn't react because there was a miracle there. There was no “praise the Lord” or “we're so happy for you” or “What? This is amazing!” No, they just say, “Where is he?” They may want to corroborate this man's accounts of the story with Jesus' telling of the story, to see if things match up, and if this really did happen the way this guy said. And he's stuck saying, “I don't know where he is.” Seemingly all alone to celebrate Jesus illuminating grace in his life.

Now we might get this ourselves. “Seemingly no one really there to celebrate what God doing in my life. I feel alone.” Equally as bad, we contribute to others feeling this way by not celebrating God's grace in them. How might you act more like these neighbors than a celebrator of God's grace in people's lives? Maybe we spend more time questioning and coveting rather than celebrating.

Maybe we even question or doubt if Jesus can even restore or save a certain person. So we don't pray. We certainly don't celebrate them. Who might this be true for you? We're not even sure if Jesus would do this, if this person could be rescued and healed and changed, so we don't pray, we don't anticipate celebrating this man.

Last, we see that Jesus' illuminating grace is also divisive.

Illumination That's Divisive

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17 So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

So the neighbors led this man to the Pharisees. Those are the Jewish leaders who made applications to the law of God – “here's how you live it. We're going to hold you accountable to live it this way, our way, because we live it this way.” The neighbors are getting the authorities involved now, maybe to help interpret what's going on, or maybe out of fear because the Pharisees wanted Jesus dead. And so any kind of association with him would be very dangerous.

Now we're giving a new detail here. The healing occurred on Saturday, on the Sabbath -- the Jews' holy day when they were to do no work. No work included countless things including not even the kneading of bread. And some say that Jesus turning this dust into mud with his saliva would fall under that category - kneading bread. Now we've seen the Jews' reaction to Jesus healing on the Sabbath before back in John chapter 5. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus. Because he was doing these things and other healing he was doing on the Sabbath.

So just as the neighbors, the Pharisees now question this poor man. “How do you receive your sight?” He had to answer it and justify Jesus' work in him once again, seemingly all by himself with no one to celebrate, not his neighbors, and not the Jewish leaders. So he says the same thing he said to his neighbors in verse 15. So the Pharisees wanting to utterly discredit Jesus, turn up the heat. “Look this guy is not from God. There's no way this guy is from God. He's not keeping the Sabbath. He's a false Prophet. And ultimately therefore he needs to die.” Which was the consequence of being a false prophet, for misleading God's people, and misrepresenting God.

But others of the Pharisees interestingly say, “Now time out. If he's a sinner, and if he's a lawbreaker, How in the world can he perform such a sign as this: making this man born blind now able to see? To seeing so there's division amongst the leaders which of course is never good and probably a fresh reminder to pray against division and for unity with your Grace and Peace leaders, especially in this trying season.

Because they're divided, they then look at him and put him on the spot and say, “well what do you say of him?” He's under crazy pressure here. And he says, “he's a prophet.” That is, a prophet from God, which we've already seen others testify to.

John 4.19

The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.

John 6:14

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

And now this man is testifying that Jesus is a Prophet. This is profoundly bold of this man because the danger he could be in. Maybe he was blissfully ignorant of the controversy surrounding Jesus so he's just answering the question. But it was still dangerous. Jesus' illuminating grace had led him to testify about who Jesus is, even if it wasn't popular, even if it was dangerous, as is true for so many Christians in the world today.

What about you? Has Jesus healed you? Has he brought illuminating grace to the eyes of your heart? Has he saved you from eternal condemnation due to you because of your sin? Has he rescued you by his grace? Has he shown you who he is - Lord and Savior of the world, the great illuminator of saving grace if you will trust in him? Do you see who he is? Do you see him as God come into the world as a man, living and dying and being buried and being raised for you? Is he your personal Lord and Savior?

If not, say yes to him today! See him by faith! So you can say, "He's shown me who he is! I believe that he lived and died and was raised from the grave for me! And I now want to live for him - including testifying to others about him."

How does his illuminating grace lead you to testify to him, about him? To whom does his illuminating grace lead you to testify to your healing by his grace, your healing by his illuminating grace, our Salvation. Your ability to see who he is as Lord and Savior is not just about us, but about others as well. Believer if you believe by God's grace, then you are called to share, even when we feel alone, like there's no one else to back up our testimony... even when we feel alone, we're never alone, because Jesus says to his people, "I am with you even to the end of the age." My illuminating grace is with you even to the end of the age. Make me known, to your neighbors and to the nations."