

*As he went 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> “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*

*<sup>6</sup> After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. <sup>7</sup> “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. (John 9:1-7)*

### **Time to Work**

“Time to wake up! We’re burning daylight.” My dad liked to use that John Wayne quote when he would wake my brothers and I up in the morning. It was ingrained into his mind growing up on a dairy farm, spent many years on that farm, and still has farming on his heart that when there’s light outside it’s time to be working. We’re burning daylight—you are wasting precious time. You need to make the most of the light because darkness is coming. Even with all of our technological advancements there’s only so much you can do in the dark. The dark is for when you are supposed to be asleep. That’s when you rest. And in complete darkness you can’t work. You can’t see. Unless you’ve been in a deep cave, we can have a hard time imagining total and complete darkness. You can feel it crawling on your skin. You can feel it pushing in around you.

The man in John 9 was well familiar with this. From the first time he opened his eyes in this world all he could see was darkness. As far as everyone, including himself, was concerned that’s all he ever would see or know. He could only imagine the things his ears heard or his hands felt. This wasn’t a case of bad eyesight; he was blind. He could not see. No bright futures on the horizon as he carefully crept along in life. There was no light at the end of the tunnel as he was reliant on other people to survive. He literally could not see any silver linings. He was born blind.

Then one day he hears a group of people having a discussion. That in itself was not strange. He heard a lot of people talking. And, to a certain point, what they were saying probably wasn’t all that strange either. It probably wasn’t anything he had not heard or thought himself at some point: **“Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”** Who is at fault? Who’s to blame?

Sound pretty insensitive when you first hear it. Then again, the disciples were doing what we so often do when we see a problem. We want to know why. Sometimes it’s not too hard to figure it out. Years of smoking led to the lung cancer. Unhealthy living habits and not taking care of her body led to the current

issues. Ignoring the rules of the road led to the speeding ticket. Often enough we see the problem and we can back track then pinpoint this is the bad thing that led to this problem. And to a certain point, it makes sense to our reasoning minds. Bad things happen now because of something bad that was done in the past.

But what happens when, like the disciples, you see a problem and you can't figure out who or what to blame. The loving parent is called home to heaven leaving spouse and children. He wants to be with Jesus but continues to suffer and get worse. She's born with a disability that will only lead to lifetime of suffering and extra difficulty. He overhears mom and dad argue again knowing that it's going to get taken out on him later. So why do those bad things happen?

There's a part of us that wants to believe that bad things happened because you did something bad because that means you might be able to fix it. We then also are hoping the opposite would be true. If I do good things, then I'll keep God happy and maybe less bad things will happen to me. But then we make God out to be a cheap vending machine that we can put in our good deed coins and hope for a good outcome. But what about all the bad things we do? If we are completely honest with ourselves, if we kept a tally of the good things we do versus the bad things, it wouldn't be really pretty chart to see. That's especially when we consider how many good things we do come from bad attitudes and sinful motivation and we do it because it's going to be good for me. Now it seems much more serious. Now God likes a tyrannical dictator that you better keep happy or else. Thanks be to God that's not who he is. He's neither cheap vending machine nor dictator. He is your good and merciful Father in heaven who does not treat you as your sins deserve.

So, why do bad things happen? Maybe we struggle with this because deep down we know, it shouldn't be this way. This darkness should not be. But there it is. It's unavoidable. And at times it feels like no one is in control and there's this great cosmic battle between light and darkness where the darkness seems to be winning. Then God seems to be a very tiny God, and why would you place your trust in him. Thanks be to God that's not true either. Instead, he is my ever-present help in trouble.

So, why do bad things happen? Jesus responds, "**Neither this man nor his parents sinned but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him**" (v.3). Jesus is not saying that either the man or his parents are sinless. He is saying you are focused on the wrong thing. While the disciples are so focused on the problem theorizing and wondering why there's this problem, the answer is quite simple. Why do bad things happen? We live in a world filled with sin, filled with sinful people, filled with darkness, death, and dying. But in Jesus we can see

through that darkness that all of this happens: **“So that the works of God might be displayed.”**

And then he goes on to show what he means. Where we tend to get wrapped up in the problem, Jesus sees the man. This man was there the entire time hearing this exchange between Jesus and his disciples. He hears this rabbi, teacher claim to be the I Am, that is, the Lord from the beginning who spoke and light first came to be. Then he hears someone spit on the ground and what sounds like someone bending over doing something on the ground. Before you know it he feels this cool mud smeared onto his eyes. Then he's told, “Go, wash.” And he trusts the one who claims to be light of the world. He washes. And as the water cleans off the mud from his eyes it washes the darkness away with it. Light fills his eyes for the first time in his life. No longer will he live by faith hoping that he won't run into something; he lives by sight. For the first time he doesn't have to imagine colors and scenery. He sees it with his own two eyes. In a way, he's a new creation, no longer blind but seeing.

There's so much darkness, evil, bad in this world. At times it can feel like there is just so much that it's going to overcome and suffocate us. Then we look at our own lives and we see that darkness in our families, in our homes, with our loved ones and people we care about. Then we look more closely at ourselves. The Bible is quite clear: we were children of the darkness and we can see proof enough of that in how we live and act and think about one another. How much have you done that you hope stays hidden in darkness so that no one will ever find out? We grope through this life trying to find direction, trying to see, lost in darkness, blinded by sin. Then from the midst of the darkness we hear one say, “I am the light of the world. The light that no darkness can overcome. I didn't come into this world to discuss theology, to teach, to do miracles. I came to lead you out of the darkness of sin and unbelief to give you the light of life. I came to make you children of God. So I sunk into the darkness for you. On that dark day on Calvary I claimed all of the darkness of your sin to be my own while hanging on that cross between God and you. I laid bare before God's feet all that you try to keep hidden, your dark sins, not trying to hide a single one of them and told him to do his worst. And he does. I endured the darkest dark when my Father turns his shining face from me and I cried out, ‘My God why have you forsaken me.’ I suffered the darkest pain and suffering of hell on that cross. The darkness of death swept over me. I was buried in that dark tomb. It sure looked like the darkness and evil won, didn't it? But three days later, I, the Morning Star rose shattering the darkness. I am the light of the World and not even the darkness of death could defeat me. The darkness of death has been swallowed up in my light. The darkness of your sin forgiven. Thanks be to God, you have the victory through me. One day you will no longer

live by faith, but with your own two eyes you will see that your Redeemer lives. You will live in my light forever.”

Yes, at one time you were children of darkness. But that’s not you any longer. Jesus smeared you with his blood. He washed in the baptismal font with the water and the Word. From that pool you a new creation. Yes, once you were blind in sin lost in darkness. Now you are children of light. It’s time to wake up! We are burning daylight. Night is coming when no one can work. Every one of us has an end date whether that will be when Christ returns or the darkness of death overtakes us. But while it is day, do the work that God has set apart for you to do. Why do bad things happen? So that you might reveal the light of Jesus in this world. There’s no time for hand wringing or worrying about the darkness we see, there’s work to do. Don’t waste your time trying to make God happy with you to keep bad things away. He’s already shining his face on you. He’s not allowing bad things to happen because he’s mad at you, he already carried out his punishment on Jesus so that he gives you peace. Your God doesn’t need your good works to prove anything to him; you are already his dearly loved child. No, he doesn’t need them, but your neighbor does. They need love. They need to feel the light of Jesus shine through you. So we have our church where Jesus shines on us in his Word and sends us out working through our hands and mouths to shine his light in all we think, say, and do. So we have our Lutheran school where this light of Jesus shines through every subject as we teach his children. Where we are constantly hearing how much worse and bad it’s getting we have the blessing of this school to shine the light of Jesus—continue to support it with your prayers and offerings. And, want to know something even better? It’s the light Jesus and his Word that works in you to do this. It has made you a new creation. It shines on us and works in us to do what he calls us to do. So wake up. We’re burning daylight. It’s time to work shining Jesus’ light. Amen.