

March 2, 2014

Lesson 21: Light of the World



John 9:1-41

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' 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, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. 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?' Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' 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.' They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 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.' 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. 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.'

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 and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 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.' 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. Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

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.' He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' 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?' Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out.

Spiritual Blindness

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.'

Light of the World

John 9:1-41

"One thing I
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The Big Story Truth: Real sight is the gift of being able to see God revealed in Jesus. True blindness, the real cause of sin, is refusing to see God's work in Jesus.

About This Scripture Passage: This passage continues to show the divide between Jesus and the religious leaders. The religious leaders are originally upset because Jesus healed the blind man on the Sabbath. Kneading was an activity specifically prohibited on the day of rest. When Jesus made the mud to put on the man's eyes, he kneaded it. This was the evidence the religious leaders needed to declare that he was a sinner. By their definition, Jesus had broken the laws that had been given to Moses in the Old Testament. They also discounted the blind man's testimony on the basis that he too was a sinner. (At that time sickness and suffering were commonly thought to be the result of a person or their parents' sin in not following all the laws correctly.)

This story, though, shows how Jesus redefines sin. For John, sin isn't about keeping the law. Sin is about refusing the Light of the World when he stands in front of you. Everything about this healing gave both the man and the religious leaders the opportunity to see that God was working in a new way... the man's saw both physically and spiritually. His sight, though, exposes the true spiritual blindness of the religious leaders.

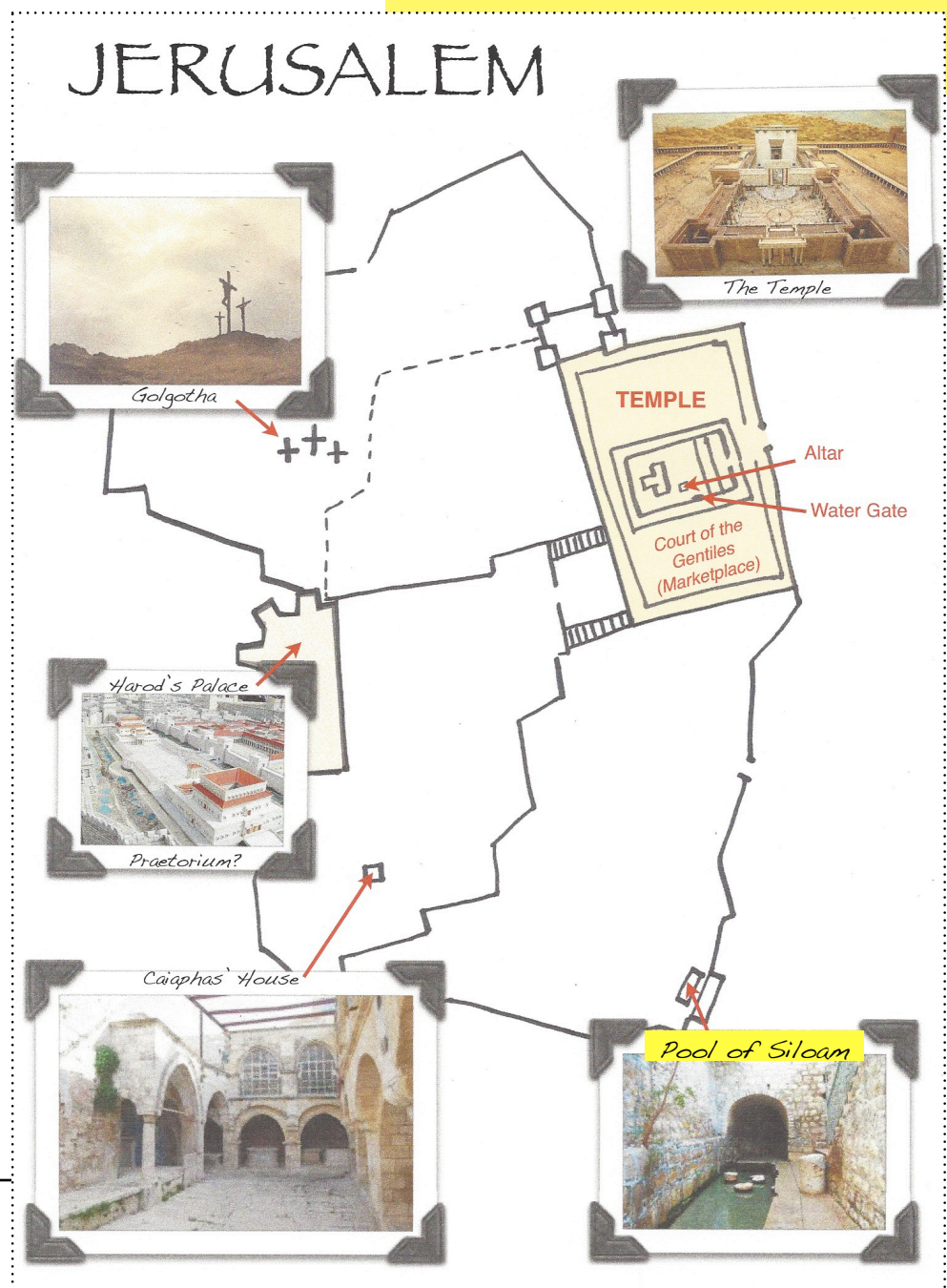
Making the Connection: Kids are often in a position of being taught. Their parents give directions; their teachers give instructions. They are often on the receiving end. Just like the man in this story, they are subject to many authorities. But in this story, the authorities get it wrong. The teachers/authorities belittle the man and accuse him. The man's parents are too afraid to speak the truth. The young man, however, is bold and speaks the truth. He is the one who "gets" who Jesus really is. He is the one who speaks up. And after it gets him in trouble, he is the one that Jesus goes looking for. When it comes to faith, adults and teachers don't always have the advantage over children. Faith, trust in Jesus, can be found at any age. This story should be one that empowers our kids to testify boldly about who Jesus is... knowing that God loves them and has given them the voice that may just be the one to help give sight to the world!

Where in the World Are We? Jesus told the man to go and to wash in the Pool of Siloam. (We've heard about this pool before, haven't we!)

For Your Reflection:

What examples have you seen of great faith in a child?

What can you learn this week from the children in your life about who Jesus is and what a relationship with God should be?



Large Group Gathering

Welcome students and families. Give groups 5 minutes to do their Faith 5. Then dismiss adults who need to leave.

Say: **Last week we talked about how Jesus called himself the Living Water. Today we are going to hear about Jesus being called the Light of the World. Do you know any songs about light? How about This Little Light of Mine? When we sing This Little Light of Mine we are singing about the love of Jesus that shines through us to the whole world! Let's sing that song together!**

Sing "This Little Light of Mine" and any other favorite songs as time allows.

Practice the Apostles' Creed, particularly focusing on the second article (the section about Jesus) and the meaning from Luther's Small Catechism pages 12-13.

Then dismiss kids to their classes.

Family Faith 5

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1. Each person shares their high and low (the best and worst things that happened this week.)
2. Read together this Bible Verse:
“One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”
3. Talk about how the Bible verse relates to your highs and lows.
4. Pray aloud for one another's highs and lows.
5. Bless one another. Make the sign of the cross on each other's heads and say these words: _____, God will show you the way!

Preschool & Early Elementary

Materials Needed:

- Spark Story Bible
- Flashlight
- Familiar Household Items
- Tape
- Scratch off paper (found in craft/toy stores, black paper that when scratched reveals color below, this can be a plain sheet of paper or paper pre-cut in the shape of a cross)
- Small flashlights (1 per child)
- Glow-in-the-Dark stickers
- Chocolate pudding, oreos, gummy worms, plastic cups and spoons

Before the Children Arrive:

Experiment with shining a flashlight on a common household item in a darkened room to find objects that make good shadows. Try to pick some objects whose shadows are easily identifiable. Then get a little more tricky. Tape two items together to make a very strange looking shadow! Prepare the snack by layering chocolate pudding, gummy worms, and crushed oreos in clear plastic snack cups. Turn the lights off in your classroom before the children arrive.

Experiencing the Story:

Meet the children at the door to your classroom with a flashlight. (If any children are apprehensive about going into the room, assure them that you will leave the door open a crack so that it won't be too dark or scary.) Have the children sit in a line all facing one wall of your classroom. Stand behind the children holding up an item in the beam of the flashlight so that it casts a shadow on the wall. Have kids guess what the object is without turning around. After they have guessed, have them turn around and look at the item in the light. Did they guess correctly? Repeat this several times with the easier items you selected and then gradually get to the harder, tricky items.

Say: **You are so good at using your eyes to figure out what I was holding up! It's usually easier to tell what something is in the light rather than in the dark though isn't it!?** Today the story that I have to tell you is about a man

who was born blind. Everyone thought that he must have done something wrong to be born blind. But Jesus said, “No! That isn’t true!” Jesus knew that the man could see something that no one else could. The man could see that Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed one... the Savior! Let’s read the story in our Spark Story Bible.

Gather the children around you and read “Pool of Siloam” (Spark Story Bible pages 432-435) by flashlight.

Activity Options:

Jesus Lights-

Say: The man believed that Jesus was the light of the world even when no one else did. He saw the truth about Jesus! Today we are going to make some reminders to help us look carefully at the truth about Jesus! Give each student a small flashlight and let them decorate it with glow-in-the-dark stickers. Then, have them practice retelling today’s story reading from their story Bibles by the light of their flashlights!

Darkness to Light-

Give each child a sheet of scratch off paper. Let them decorate or make designs by scratching off the black layer to reveal the colors below. Talk about how Jesus helped the blind man to see... but the best and most beautiful thing of all is that the man saw the truth about Jesus!

Snack-

Serve the pudding/gummy worm/oreo cups. Talk about how Jesus took mud and put it on the man’s eyes to make him see! Talk about what (and who) helps you to see the truth about Jesus more clearly.

Upper Elementary Middle School & High School

Materials Needed:

- Items that feel like one thing, but really are another (such as a beach ball that is really a globe, a pen that is really a squirt gun, a pop bottle that is really an art project, etc.)
- Spark NRSV Bible
- Blindfold
- Copies of the story handout for each student
- Paper bags
- Card stock
- Pens, markers, or other materials for card making

Before the Students Arrive:

Hide the items that you will be using for your guessing game. Keep them close by in a bag or something though so that you can easily access one item at a time during your opening activity.

Experiencing the Story:

After students enter and sit down, ask for a brave volunteer. Blindfold your volunteer and hand them one of your mystery items. Have them guess what it is that they are holding based on what they feel alone. Then, have them take off their blindfold and look. (The idea is that they will be fooled, thinking that they for sure knew what the item was until seeing it in the light.)

Say: **In the story that we are going to read about today, the religious leaders thought that they were absolutely certain that they knew what pleased God and what God was doing. They were so certain that they knew who was sinful and who was righteous (good or pleasing to God.) But actually, they were pretty far off. Let's read the story together.**

Read John 9:1-41.

Say: The Pharisees were so quick to judge the man and say that it was because he was sinful that he was born blind. And they were so quick to judge Jesus and to think that he too was a sinner and couldn't have healed the man. But the truth is that they were the blind ones! They were blind because they couldn't see that Jesus- the Light of the World, the Messiah, God With Us- was standing right in front of them!

Ask: When have you been judged too quickly? What happened? Has there ever been a time when you know that you have judged someone wrongly or too quickly?

Say: It's not just back in Bible times when people were judged for their illnesses. I have another story to share with you this morning about that. Ask for a volunteer to help read the story.

Activity:

Today we are going to make some cards for those on our church's prayer list. They are people who are in need of healing... and who will be made very happy by the light that cards made by you will bring! As a tie in to the story, have kids use pieces of paper bag in their card designs. (Show students how crumpling and smoothing a piece of paper bag can make it soften and give it a different texture.) Be sure that kids know the names of those they are making the cards for. Close your time together with a prayer for all who need healing and for all those who need physical healing and all those who need to be given the eye-sight of faith!

It was one of the hardest times in my life. I had just found out that I was diagnosed with a disease called Multiple Sclerosis. All my life I had been able to depend on my body to do pretty much what I wanted it to do. But suddenly, I was seeing double. I couldn't walk on my own. And I couldn't feel my fingers or my toes. On top of it all, I had just moved far away from my Iowa farm home to Colorado.

At first I was in the hospital. Slowly I started to get stronger. I took medicine and had help from physical therapists. I practiced every day trying to get good enough at balancing and lifting my legs to be able to walk again.

Finally, one day I was able to walk to the mailbox. I was going to mail some letters. But when I got there, I looked down at my hands only to realize that I had dropped the letters somewhere along the way and hadn't even realized it because I couldn't feel my fingers!

The next day I had a plan. I took a small brown paper bag and put the letters inside. I twisted the top and clenched it tight in my hands so that I would be able to make it all the way to the mailbox. As I walked down the street I felt so happy and proud that I was able to mail the letters by myself!

I was about a half block away from the mailbox when I heard two women on the street talking about me. I still remember what they said. They said, "Isn't it a shame that a young woman like that is drunk at this time of the morning!"

I was so sad to hear them saying that about me! They didn't know how hard I had worked and how hard it was just to keep going. All they saw was me swaying as I walked, struggling to keep my balance.

When I made it back to the house, I fell down on the floor and cried "Lord, it's not fair that these women judged me without ever knowing what I'm going through!" I remember the hot tears sliding down my face. Then I realized that Jesus had been

judged by others. Some of the people that Jesus healed were too.

Suddenly a peace came over me. I stopped crying. It was clear to me that God was with me calming me down. I asked God to help me not to judge others. I even started to laugh as God seemed to say, "Someday this will make a good story!"

- Karen