

## Opening Prayer

### Welcome:

Welcome to the Germantown Church of God. I am glad that you are joining me today. I am Pastor Mark Hosler. If you are new to our Church, we are located in Cascade, MD. You can find out more information about our Church on our website – [www.germantowncog.org](http://www.germantowncog.org), or on our Facebook Page.

### Scripture Reading

John 9:1-12

### Message      **Becoming Like Christ – Seeing Brokenness as an Opportunity**

We have been doing a series of sermon studies on the topic, ***Becoming the Image of Christ***. Our foundational verse for this series is Romans 8:29 - <sup>29</sup> ***For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*** It is God's desire, more than that, God's plan for your life as a follower of Christ, that your character will be changed into the Image of His Son, Jesus. Whenever we are talking about experiencing change in our character, we are talking about something that is difficult. We can change the way we comb our hair, or the way we dress, or the way we eat. But when we start talking about changing the way we behave, we know that is a bigger challenge. Fortunately God not only expects us to change so that we resemble Jesus, He is ready to help us. He equips us with the gift of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to be different. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul describes the life of someone who has received the Holy Spirit: <sup>22</sup> ***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*** <sup>23</sup> ***gentleness and self-control.*** Those characteristics are really a description of the character of Christ. So we can ask the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to produce the character of Christ.

We have discovered that this process of being changed into the image of Christ is just that. **It is a process.** The changes take place when we discover areas of our lives where we are “unlike” Christ, and we yield our will to Him and adopt His character as our own. As we think about this process of becoming like Jesus, we have been looking at some stories from the Gospels where the disciples learned how different Jesus was from them. They had accepted His call to follow him. They lived with him, followed him. They observed the way He behaved, the way he responded to certain situations, the way He interacted with God and with other people. And as they observed Him, they discovered that their character, their way of thinking and behaving sometimes clashed with Jesus. Those instances where they clashed with Jesus became “change moments” or “transformation moments.” Today I want to look at the story of an encounter with a blind man. As they encounter the blind man we learn that the way the disciples responded to this blind man clashed with the way Jesus responded to him. The outcome of the story will affect the ministry of the disciples as they followed Jesus and then as they continued their ministry in the Church after Jesus had returned to heaven.

**The Story.** The story begins with Jesus and his disciples walking along a road. As John, who was one of Jesus' disciples tells the story, he makes a point of telling us that Jesus noticed a blind man. As I read that wording, it makes me wonder if the disciples even saw the blind man. Had they become so used to seeing blind people, or beggars, broken people, that they had become blind to the needs of others? **Becoming like Jesus means that we are going to notice people around us, to pay attention to them.**

When the disciples realized that he was there, because they saw Jesus' eyes turn toward him, the first thing they thought about was not – “What can we do to care for this man?”, but rather, “Whose fault is it that he is blind?” ***Who sinned? This man or his parents?*** It sounds like a cold and callous question when we first read the text, but when we understand the times in which the disciples lived, it may not have been so unusual. The disciples had grown up being influenced by a misguided theological thought – the doctrine of retribution. Basically that teaching says that **if you do something bad you will get something bad** – some kind of suffering, or sickness, or hardship. It was really quite an old belief. We see it in the Old Testament book of

Job, which was likely one of the oldest stories in the Bible. Job was a good man, a righteous man. He had a whole string of misfortune. He was one of the richest men in the world. But he lost everything he had, his children all died, and then he was afflicted with painful physical suffering. He was a pitiful sight. Job had some friends who came to sit with him to comfort him. But his friends also gave him some advice. His friends were convinced that Job was going through all this suffering because of some sin he had committed. God was punishing him. Here is one sample of their argument:

***“The lamp of a wicked man is snuffed out;  
the flame of his fire stops burning.***

***<sup>6</sup> The light in his tent becomes dark;  
the lamp beside him goes out.***

Bad things happen to bad people. Good things happen to good people. In some cases that may be true, but it wasn't true in Job's case. Job was a righteous man. Jesus' disciples sounded a whole lot like Job's friends. This man is blind because of sin. Since he was blind from birth it could have been some sin he committed, or a sin that his parents committed. In either case, God was punishing him. There are a lot of people who still think that way. When bad things happen it is because we have done something to deserve it.

However, Jesus says that is not the case with this man. Sometimes bad things just happen – no cause, no reason. This isn't a perfect world where everything is fair. So Jesus makes it clear to His disciples that in this case, this man had not brought this on Himself. The Message translation says it like this: <sup>3-5</sup> ***Jesus said, “You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here.*** So here is the **Clash Moment** –

- The Disciples believed that this man was blind because of some sin
- But Jesus said, that's not the case here. A difference of opinion that will become a teaching moment for Jesus and His disciples.

Now, let us understand some things – All sickness, brokenness is the result of sin. Not specific sin, but because of the presence of sin in the world. It's no longer a perfect world, and as a result of human rebellion against God, there is brokenness. And let us understand that Jesus is not saying that retribution is not a reality. There are definitely situations in the Bible where someone experienced suffering or hardship as a direct result of their behavior.

But Jesus makes it clear that **this is not an example of retribution**. That was not true in Job's case, and it is not true in this case. As the Message translation puts it, the disciples were asking the wrong question. Jesus says this man's blindness is an opportunity for us to do the work of God. ***“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.”***

Jesus wants his followers to learn that there are times when we must ask the more important question – How can we do the work of God in this situation? How can we demonstrate the love of God toward this man rather than be judgmental and condemning? As the disciples watched, Jesus did the work of God and healed the blind man. **Becoming like Jesus will mean that we do not blame or shame those who are suffering. We discern what God wants us to do to provide relief.**

Did the disciples learn anything from this incident? Did this encounter influence the way they would react to broken people? In Acts 3 there is a story that gives us the answer to that.

***3 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. <sup>2</sup> Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. <sup>3</sup> When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. <sup>4</sup> Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” <sup>5</sup> So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.***

***<sup>6</sup> Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” <sup>7</sup> Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. <sup>8</sup> He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into***

***the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. <sup>9</sup> When all the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup> they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.***

So Peter and John witnessed how Jesus responded to the blind man. They learned from His example and his instruction. Becoming like Jesus means that **you notice people who are in need**. It may be someone that you have encountered many times before just as this beggar who sat at the Temple. And **becoming like Jesus means that we will not blame or shame those who are broken. We will discern what God wants us to do to relieve their suffering.**

And how about us? I fear that too often we become more preoccupied with the wrong questions just as the disciples were.

- **Why are these people poor?**
- **Why don't they take better care of themselves?**
- **If they are poor how can they afford a cell phone?**

Perhaps it is time for us to ask, ***How can we do the work of God with regard to this person? What would Jesus do? How can we be more like Jesus?***

**Prayer**

**Blessing -** Isaiah 50:7

**Because the Sovereign LORD helps me,  
I will not be disgraced.  
Therefore have I set my face like flint,  
and I know I will not be put to shame.**