

One Thing I do Know

John 9

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The story in John 9 presents us with a very interesting situation. Jesus meets a blind man, spits on the ground, makes some mud with his saliva, puts it on the man's eyes, and says, "Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam." The man went and washed and came home seeing. That is right. A blind man had some muddy saliva placed on his eyes, went and washed in a pool, and he came back seeing. Please don't miss that crucial point in the story. A blind man was touched by Jesus, muddy saliva and all, and after washing in a pool he came back seeing.

If you are looking for answers to all of life's questions in this story found in John 9, you might not find them. The story begins with a question about why the man is born blind. Was it the sins of the man himself or his parents that led to his blindness? Jesus rules that out, but other than saying his blindness is an opportunity for the power of God to be displayed, Jesus does not explain why people are born blind, and he doesn't really explain any of the other sufferings and disappointments humans face. What this story does give us is one single man, a man born blind who is given his sight, and under intense questioning from people who want to cast doubt on this man named Jesus who heals on the Sabbath, this one single blind man who now has sight stands firm. He gives a testimony only he can give. "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see."

If you once were blind but now could see, that would make a pretty big impression on you. All kinds of doubts and questions might arise, but you would know one thing for sure. "I was blind but now I see." No, this story in John does not answer every question about blindness, the cause of blindness, or any other disability or disappointment, except that it shows us in a very clear way, that sometimes God acts in very specific, and very powerful, and very transforming ways, in the lives of his people. And when you have received that gift, it gives you something to stand on and something to stake your faith on. "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see."

A dear friend once told me a story about her son. When her son was in his mid-20's, he was praying each and every day for the ability to see how God was at work in his life. Like this passage in John, this young man was praying and believing that each and every day there might be a sign of God's work that would be displayed in a way that he could see. So one day he began his morning praying to have eyes to see how God was at work. Later that day a man knocked on his door. The man was down on his luck, and he had a story to prove it. But it was not your typical story of needing a few bucks for this or that. The man said he needed

\$17 for a very specific need. Our young friend asked for a moment to consider this request, closed his door, and looked in his wallet. His mom, telling me the story, said, "He never has any cash in his wallet." But the young man looked, and this day there was cash in his wallet. That was the first sign of God at work! He actually had some cash in his wallet. When he counted the cash, he discovered he had exactly \$17. So he took the money to the door, opened it, handed it to the man, and the man left. End of story

Not quite. The young man and his wife had recently refinanced their house, and in the settlement the bank discovered they had slightly overcharged our friend. So our young friend goes to the mailbox that same afternoon, that very same afternoon, finds a letter from the bank, opens it, and finds the bank has sent him a refund check. Any guesses on the amount of the refund check? Our young friend simply smiled and gave thanks to God when he saw that the check was for \$17. Exactly seventeen dollars.

When our son Alex was just a baby, we found it extremely difficult to afford all of the things necessary in raising four children. Julie was staying home at the time, loving being a mom, but feeling the pressure of making my salary cover the needs of the family. She had started a daily prayer journal, and was not only giving her requests to God, but perhaps more importantly, trying to listen for the guidance and direction of God. At one point, we had run out of baby formula for Alex, and we did not have money to buy any more. So even though we did not have the money, Julie was getting ready to go to the grocery store and as she put it, "Write a hot check." Not surprisingly, God told her in her prayers, "Don't write a hot check. Wait on me." So Julie waited. Later that day, a couple of hours later, our neighbor knocked on the door. She said her friend was visiting from out of town. Her friend was a representative for a formula company. The friend heard that the neighbors (us) had a newborn, and so she wanted to give us a case of formula.

A few months later, that case of formula was gone. Julie was praying once again, and as she prayed she told God that the formula had run out, and she was going to have to buy some more. She explained to God it was not that she doubted God could provide, but we were leaving early the next morning on a college retreat and she did not have enough baby formula to feed Alex through the whole retreat. She patiently explained to God that we were leaving early in the morning, and if she did not buy the formula that very night, Alex would not have food during the retreat. Again God told her to wait. Julie listened. She waited. Late that night our neighbor knocked on the door. Our neighbor's friend was back in town, and this time she had a three month supply of formula.

Three months later, that supply of formula was gone. As Julie prayed, she said to God, "I get it. I get it. I am supposed to trust you." That day a package arrived in the mail. The neighbor's friend had sent another supply of formula. Julie said she used that formula, and the day it ran out was the day Alex turned one year old, and he no longer needed formula.

Many years ago we had a friend Becky who was dying of cancer. Becky was a beautiful woman with a very special family. She and her husband were living in Houston. The morning she died a friend of the family who lived in Oklahoma was out early walking his dog. He and the dog had a little route they took each morning. That morning the dog wanted to go a different way. The man let the dog lead. The dog headed over to a tree, sort of out of the way. The dog was barking as he led the way to the tree. When the man got to the tree the dog stopped barking. Everything else was strangely quiet. Sitting on a branch in the tree was our dear friend Becky. She said to the man, "Call David." David was her husband. It was very early in the morning, maybe 4:30 am. But she said, "Call David." The man got out his phone and called her husband David. When David answered the phone he broke down and said, "Becky just died. Your phone call came at just the right moment."

I don't understand everything, and I don't know that the bible explains everything. Why are people born blind? Why do dear friends die of cancer? Why? Why? Why? I don't know. But I do believe God works, and I believe his works are displayed in the world around us. And I do believe that the way God works can give us faith. Sometimes a person just puts his feet down and finds that he is standing on solid ground. He can't explain how he got to that solid ground. All he can say, "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see."

But I want to tell you what is really amazing to me about God's grace? It is not that people have answered prayers and give thanks to God. Of course that is a wonderful thing, and it is full of meaning. The amazing thing to me is how people can have prayers that are not answered, at least not in ways we can see clearly and visibly, and these dear friends still cling to their faith.

I am thinking of many of you here this very morning. You have had to wrestle with disappointment and loss and grief. And yet instead of throwing up your hands in despair, you have found something deep within you, a faith that endures and abides and will not be swept away, and you also say, "One thing I do know...." You are like those three men in the book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who when faced with the fiery furnace said, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship their image." Their faith was not

dependent on God rescuing them in that particular moment in that particular way. They knew what God was capable of, and so they trusted God completely, even in the face of death.

I am thinking of many of you here this morning. You might not have the story of the man who knew one thing, “I was blind but now I see.” But you have something else. You know there is more to this story than one thing the man knows. In fact, the man ends up knowing more than one thing. The story does not end with “One thing I know, I was blind but now I see.” The story ends with the man coming face to face with Jesus and for the first time in his life seeing things clearly. After he has his eyesight, he meets Jesus again. And now Jesus reveals that he is the Son of Man. And the blind man truly sees. He sees Jesus. He believes in Jesus. And he worships Jesus.

What I want to thank you for this morning is for being a great cloud of witnesses. You have believed not only that Jesus does work in specific ways on specific days and in specific lives. You have believed not only that folks like the man in John 9 can plant their feet and say, “One thing I do know....” You have come to believe that there is one thing we all can know. You have come to believe that on one day, in one very specific way, God proved how trustworthy he is. Jesus had died and been placed in the grave. And then one day the world saw that God keeps his promises. That day did not explain every suffering and every disappointment. But that day showed God keeps his promises. Jesus was raised from the dead. Sin and Satan were defeated. And that God stands before us each and every day and he asks us to trust him, to trust him not just with this day, not just with every day, but with all of eternity. He asks us to trust that he will one day make everything right. There is a cross to show his love and an empty tomb to show his power. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and he is alive and he reigns forever and ever and ever.

I am so grateful for a blind man who sees, for a young man whose wallet had exactly \$17 in it, for baby formula that miraculously lasts exactly one year, for a vision of a woman on her way to heaven who stopped for a moment and sat in a tree and said, “Call my husband”. I am grateful for the very specific ways God has worked in each and every one of our lives. But most of all I am grateful that we have the cross of Christ and we have the hope of the resurrection. We *all* have the cross of Christ. We *all* have the hope of the resurrection. And because of that we can all say, “One thing I do know, if God is for us, who can be against us?” Friends, one thing I do know, and you know it too. God is for us. Hallelujah and thanks be to God.