

# HEALED BY A TOUCH

## John 9:1-7

*You can experience the healing power  
of Christ.*

A sermon preached by  
Rev. Dr. William O. (Bud) Reeves  
First United Methodist Church  
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Sometimes the old stories are the best stories. Forty years ago my brother told this story as he gave the youth report to annual conference. He got it from our dad. Isn't it odd the things you remember?

There was a Baptist preacher who was walking down the street one day, when he saw a boy with a box full of newborn puppies. There was a sign that said, "Puppies For Sale." So the preacher stopped to inquire.

"What kind of puppies are those?" he asked the boy.

Knowing who the preacher was, and being a good salesman, the boy replied, "They're Baptist puppies!"

"Very good," the preacher said. But he didn't need a puppy, Baptist or not, so he went on his way.

A week or so later, this Baptist preacher was passing along the same street, and the boy was still out there with a box full of puppies, maybe one or two less than he had before. Just trying to make conversation, the preacher asked again, "Now what kind of puppies did you say those were?"

The boy replied, "They're Methodist puppies!"

"Methodist puppies!" the preacher said. "Just last week you said they were Baptist puppies."

The boy explained, "Yes, sir, but that was before they opened their eyes!"

"Dad jokes" run in my family. Now, if you're a Baptist who is our guest in worship today, feel free to tell that joke the other way around.

Today we want to talk about eyes opening and a fellow who had his eyes opened when he was touched by Jesus Christ. He wasn't a Baptist or a Methodist, but by the time Jesus was through with him, he could see, and he was a believer.

The whole ninth chapter of the Gospel of John is devoted to the story of the man born blind, and I think it is a crucial event for understanding some fundamental issues about the

mission of Jesus, about healing, and about suffering. Jesus makes three very important statements in this chapter, and I want to look at each one.

First, when they came upon the man who had been born blind, the disciples immediately assumed the conventional wisdom, that either he or his mother or father or somebody had sinned to cause his congenital blindness. They thought God was making this man pay for somebody's sin with his suffering. But Jesus quickly counters that idea: "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.*"<sup>1</sup>

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do the innocent suffer? This is an issue as current as today's news, and for many people, the reality of faith and God rest on the answer to this question.

Ted Turner was a pioneer in the cable news business, the founder of CNN and TBS and several philanthropic organizations. He is also a non-believer and famously critical of Christianity. His problem with Christianity stems from two tragedies in his life. Turner was raised Christian, but when he was 24, his father Ed committed suicide. Then his sister, Mary Jane, died a slow and painful death with the disease lupus. Turner said, "I was taught that God was love, and God was powerful. And I couldn't understand how someone so innocent should be made or allowed to suffer so."<sup>2</sup> One would hope, now that Turner himself suffers from Lewy Body Dementia, that he is seeing things differently.

Ted Turner's question is not unique or new; it certainly is an issue in our Scripture today. What does Jesus say? He says it is not right to try to assign blame for every tragedy that occurs. It's not the man's fault he was born blind. It is not necessarily his parents' fault, either. The Good News is, God can take this tragic situation and reveal his glory through it. He can make a good thing happen and overcome the brokenness of this poor man's life.

There will always be things we do not understand, and suffering is one of them. Why does a good Christian get cancer that takes his life? Why does a child die? Why do fatal accidents happen? Why are good families torn apart by divorce? Why are there wars? Why do people starve? There are so many things we don't understand.

But by faith we do understand this: God is God, and we are not. God does love us. He does not afflict us, and he suffers with us. To his glory, he can bring good things out of evil: hope in the midst of grief, strength in the midst of illness, peace in the midst of conflict. As Paul said, "*In all things God works for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose.*"<sup>3</sup> Even in a tragic situation, we can see God working for good. We can see his glory.

God's glory was revealed in the man born blind because Jesus healed him. He put mud on his eyes, told him to go wash, and when the man did, he could see, for the first time ever. Such a healing caused a great commotion, and soon the religious authorities, the Pharisees, were investigating. Who would do such a thing and do it on a Sabbath? Was this Jesus a miracle worker, a magician, or a demon? They questioned the man; they questioned his parents; they questioned the man again. Finally, the man born blind said, "*I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. ...If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.*"<sup>4</sup> The Pharisees promptly threw him out of the court and into the street.

Jesus heard about the commotion and came to find the man. When he did, he just had one question for him: "*Do you believe in the Son of Man?*"<sup>5</sup> The man asked who this

might be, that he might believe in him. Jesus replied with his second important statement, *“You have seen him, and the one who is speaking to you is he.”*<sup>6</sup> Immediately, the man believed and fell down and worshipped Jesus.

This part of the conversation is so important because it establishes the connection between faith and healing. For healing, especially spiritual healing, to be effective, it has to be coupled with faith. To be healed, and to stay healed, you have to believe and practice your faith. The content of that belief is very simple. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord? Have you made him Lord of your life? Faith opens up the door to healing.

In the last few years, medical researchers have done extensive study on the relationship between faith and healing, and they have discovered some remarkable things. Statistically, people of faith are healthier. Those who pray before surgery do better. Those who are prayed for, even if they do not know it, recover quicker. Those who have a positive outlook of faith and hope in God have fewer health problems and recuperate faster when they do have illnesses. There is a verifiable connection between faith and healing.<sup>7</sup>

The Pharisees could have seen this if they hadn't been so blind. The irony of this whole story becomes clear at the end of the chapter, when Jesus makes the third important statement. *“I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see, and those who 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.”*<sup>8</sup> What does he mean by that?

The irony is that the man born blind has his eyes opened to the reality of Christ and comes to faith. The religious leaders, who can see just fine physically, are blinded by their sin. The Light of the world, Jesus Christ, is standing right in front of them. In their spiritual blindness, they have wandered away from the truth and have lost their way to God.

A few years ago, there was a news story about a little toddler from Edmonton, Canada, named Erika who wandered out of her house while her mother was sleeping. Erika spent an entire night in the freezing Canadian winter. When her mother noticed her daughter missing, she began frantically to search for her baby. When she found her outside the next morning, Erika appeared to be totally frozen. Her arms and legs were stiff, and there were no signs of life at all. But Erika was rushed to the Children's Hospital in Edmonton, and God guided the rescue workers and doctors in bringing Erika back to life. To everybody's amazement, there was no brain damage, and when she was released, the doctors said Erika could live her life just like any normal child.

Commenting on that news story, Pastor David Duncan said, *“Some of us have wandered away from our Father's house, and it has brought us near the point of death. Our hearts have been hardened, and our spiritual bodies look as lifeless as the little girl in the snow. But our Father noticed we were missing and is searching for us. He can take our lifeless spirits and restore us to health. Let the Father pick you up and take you back to the house.”*<sup>9</sup>

You can come in the house today. You don't have to freeze spiritually. You can experience the healing power of Jesus Christ. Take these three steps back toward home.

**Acknowledge your blindness.** Like the Pharisees, I think we build up the wall of religion and tradition and organization until we wouldn't know the Holy Spirit if it bit us. We get comfortable in our pew. We get complacent in our walk. We think we have arrived

as Christians. Slowly but surely, we drift away. We slow down in our discipleship; we decrease our commitments; we forget to pray. Soon the spiritual joints start to stiffen up and the coldness surrounds our hearts, and the new thing God is always doing becomes not a blessing, but a threat to our comfort zone. Jesus says, "Open your eyes and realize that you cannot see, unless you see through me!"

Then we can **believe in the Son of God**. The second step is to have faith. Follow him. Commit your heart. Turn to him and be healed. Trust him with your life. And most of all, give him control. You can't heal yourself, but the Great Physician can carry you inside and warm you up and restore your life. It starts when you believe.

**Finally, believe that your brokenness may be an avenue for the work of the Spirit in your life.** This is one way God reveals his glory. We like to avoid pain at any cost. But suffering can be a great teacher. Real courage and deep faith and great strength are not born of pleasure, but in pain. The world was redeemed by the suffering of Christ on the cross. Why should his disciples expect a life of ease?

But when we come through it all, we see the glory. When we survive the suffering, we see what we have become; we see that God has been working to make us stronger, more spiritual, more faithful. We see that we have been healed in the midst of our trials. We have been touched by Christ.

Tony Campolo, a marvelous preacher, teacher and author, tells about speaking in a church in Oregon one time, and while he was there, he prayed with a man who had cancer. The very next week, he got a call from the man's wife. She said, "You prayed for my husband. He had cancer."

Tony could tell by the tone of her voice what had happened. "He died today," she said. Tony felt terrible, but the lady told him this: "Don't feel bad. When he came into that church last Sunday he was filled with anger. He knew he was going to be dead in a short period of time, and he hated God. He was 58 years old, and he wanted to see his children and grandchildren grow up. He was angry that this all-powerful God didn't take away his sickness and heal him. He would lie in bed and curse God. The more his anger grew towards God, the more miserable he was to everybody around him. It was an awful thing to be in his presence. After you prayed for him, a peace came over him and a joy came into him. Tony, the last three days have been the best days of our lives. We've sung. We've laughed. We've read Scripture. We prayed. Oh, they've been wonderful days. And I called to thank you for laying your hands on him and praying for healing."

Then this lady on the phone told Tony Campolo a very profound thing. She said, "He wasn't cured, but he was healed."<sup>10</sup>

In a few moments, you will have an opportunity to have hands laid on you and prayers said for your healing. You can be anointed with healing oil in the name of Jesus Christ. I don't know where your life is broken today; I just know we all are somehow. That's why we come. You may be in need today of physical healing; we will pray for that. You may need emotional healing because of a relationship that is broken in your life. You may need spiritual healing of a sin that has built a wall between you and God. There may be a sense in your heart that you have become blind to a real experience of the power of Christ, and you just want to ask God to restore your authentic faith today. Or you may want to come and be anointed on behalf of a friend or a loved one who needs a healing touch of God's amazing grace. Whatever reason you have to come, do come and feel the healing touch of Christ.

Will you be cured? Possibly. Can you be healed? Positively. Will God be glorified? Absolutely!

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<sup>1</sup>John 9:3.

<sup>2</sup>Ken Ham, *How Could A Loving God?...* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2007), 32.

<sup>3</sup>Romans 8:28.

<sup>4</sup>John 9:25, 33.

<sup>5</sup>John 9:35.

<sup>6</sup>John 9:37.

<sup>7</sup><https://www.libertymagazine.org/article/religious-faith-promotes-well-being>.

<sup>8</sup>John 9:39-41.

<sup>9</sup>David Duncan, from Bob McKeown, "A Tiny Survivor," *Dateline*, MSNBC, March 20, 2001.

<sup>10</sup>Tony Campolo, "Year of Jubilee," *Preaching Today*, Tape #212.