

The Testimony of One Born Blind

John 9:24-41, Trinity Sunday XIII

September 2, 2007

Beloved of the Lord.....As Lutherans we all have heard repeatedly that man cannot be saved by his own good works, but he is saved by grace alone, found alone in Christ Jesus, who died on the cross for our sins. Sad to say, though by faith we know this to be true, there is still a part of us, deep or not so deep inside of us, which still thinks like the Pharisees of our lesson. For our Old Adam, has always been, and will always be, a Pharisee. And what makes a Pharisee a Pharisee, is his focus on the law, not the Gospel. Moreover the thoughts of a Pharisee are not his own sins, nor repentance, nor faith in Christ, but the Pharisee thinks only of the sins of others. And when the Pharisee is not thinking of other people's sins, he is thinking only of his own good works. As Lutherans our problem is this, we often fail to see the Pharisee within our own heart. And does a Pharisee have any use for the Lord Jesus? Let us therefore learn not to be blind to our own sins, but have our eyes opened that we may see alone the righteousness of Christ. For His righteousness alone, is our own, by faith.

I. The Pharisees were blinded by their own good works, so that they could not see the good works of Christ Jesus. We begin first with the miracle of Jesus healing the blind man. It is an unusual miracle. For the Bible says, Jesus "spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." Clay made from spit was the means of healing which Jesus chose. Then Jesus instructed the blind man to wash off the clay in the pool of Siloam. "He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing!" By this miracle of Jesus, the blind man was given sight! Jesus used the means of simple clay and water, connected to His Word! Imagine what it would've been like to witness and see that miracle of Jesus with our own eyes!... to see Jesus working through visible means and the power of His Word connected to those means! Ah.....but what was it that we saw last week here in church? Didn't we see God working through the visible means of water in Baptism? Didn't we see water poured upon children, water that was connected to God's Word and command? To this day God still works through visible means which are connected to God's Word. And here this Sunday upon that altar, you will see the visible means of the bread and wine. Connected to that bread and wine you will hear the Words which Jesus declares saying, "This is my body.....this is my blood.....given and shed for you for the remission of sins." There is still healing in His Words isn't there!

This healing of the blind man caused no small stir in the community. All the people knew Jesus had

performed a genuine miracle. Moreover the blind man was telling everybody that Jesus had healed him. He believed Jesus was a Prophet sent from God to heal him. He gave God all glory.

But when the Pharisees heard of this great miracle, they did not worship God at all! The Pharisees hated Jesus, and they hated even more the honor Jesus received from the people. What were they to do? They pressured the blind man to discount Jesus. "Give God the praise [they said]: we know that this man is a sinner." What they were really saying is, "Don't praise Jesus for this miracle, praise our God, the God of the Pharisees. For this Jesus is not god, but a wicked man, a deceiver, a sinner!" Oh if they only knew the blasphemy they just spoke! If they only knew how God's anger burned against them when their own anger burned against Christ! They insinuated that Jesus had done some sort of trick, and not a genuine miracle. They tried to get the blind man to change his story, so the people would doubt this miracle of Christ. They badgered and insulted the blind man. They said he was lying about this miracle because he was a dumb follower of Jesus. "Thou art his disciple, but we are Moses' disciple", they haughtily said! They reeked of pride!

But how did the blind man answer these false accusers? With amazement at their unbelief he said, "Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes!.....Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind! If this man were not of God, he could do nothing!" In these words of the blind man, we see the simple and beautiful testimony of a true believer! Though pressed and harassed by the spiritually dead Pharisees, the man did not yield to their pressure! He spoke the Gospel truth in plain fashion, like a little child! And the Pharisees, with all their education, with all their bloated egos, could not refute his simple words! In the end, all the Pharisees could do was cast the healed man out of the church. They excommunicated the blind man from the synagogue.

It is just as Jesus said in John chapter sixteen. "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." Where there is no faith in Christ, there is only hatred toward Christ, hatred toward those who follow Him. "Marvel not brethren, if the world hate you." Indeed if we speak the truth of Christ as the blind man did, the very world we live in will hate us. Nevertheless we ought to hold fast to God's Word and not waver nor be fearful. For the Lord says, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." I Jn. 4:4

Your Lord Jesus lives in your very heart by faith. Therefore do not fear the Pharisees of this world, but speak the truth to them.

But here for a moment let us consider just what a Pharisee is. First, a Pharisee is a religious person within the visible church. What I mean here is that you don't find Pharisees outside of a church, but within the church. Second, the sole focus of a Pharisee is the law, not the Gospel. The law is the focal point of their religion. Instead of focusing on the wondrous forgiveness of sins found in Jesus Christ, the Pharisee prefers to focus on their own fulfillment of God's commandments, how they can serve and please God. And there is a danger here which all Christians should note: if we focus more on the law than on the Gospel, we ourselves will turn into Pharisees. We will be seduced by our own pride and self-righteousness. But how can we put this in a picture? Picture a man out in a field with a shovel. He desires to build a high and tall mountain, one shovel, one scoop at a time. But as he frantically digs and piles up the earth in a mound, at the same time he digs himself into a hole, a deep hole. But he is so immersed with the thought of making a high and grand mountain, he is not aware of the hole he digs himself into. This is the life of all Pharisees, blinded by their own good works. It is a hole we dare not dig ourselves into. For the apostle Paul writes to the Romans, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt" Rom. 4:4. This means that for all the people who work to please God by their good works, those who seek a reward of God by the good deeds they have done, the only reward they will receive is a debt. Those who try to build a tall mountain with dirt, are bound to get dirty. What is it really that they are shoveling?

II. To this day Jesus is still opening the eyes of the blind, even Pharisees such as ourselves. Now let us add another facet to the picture of the man who is frantically digging himself into a hole. Zoom back the image and behold a tall mountain beside the man with his little dirty mound. This is a snowcapped mountain, a Mt. Everest, a holy mountain, pure and tall and high, and at the top of this mountain there stands the Lord Jesus in all His glory, Son of God, and Son of Man. He stands upon the mountain of His own good works, the healing of the blind man, the healing of the sick, the feeding of the five thousand.....and His greatest work of all is His blood atonement for the sins of the whole world upon the cross. There is no greater no better nor nobler works that this! And now picture again this poor blind man at the bottom of the mountain, who is frantically trying to build up his own mountain with his dirty shovel and with his dirty hands. Dear friends, where do you and I fit into the picture? Will we be the blind Pharisee who is still shoveling his own unclean works, or will we lay that

shovel of self-righteousness aside, and lift up our eyes to the that holy mount, and lay claim by faith to God's only-begotten and holy Son?

And so the Bible says, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" Rom. 4:5. The Lord Jesus who stands upon His own high mountain of his own pure and holy works, desires that you put away your unclean works, and lay claim by faith to your righteous Christ, who alone has paid for the sins of the world. He does not turn away the sinner who sorrows over his sin. For Jesus and His good works, and His blood atonement on the cross, is a light, a beacon to this whole world that lives in the darkness and blindness of unbelief. And Jesus Himself said before He healed the blind man, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Dear friend, is He your Light? Is He your Savior? Lay claim to Him by faith! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved! Forsake your own works and rejoice in the good works of Jesus Christ, namely the forgiveness of sins which He freely gives to the world through the cross? Again the Bible says, "But to him that worketh not, but believe on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." In the one and only holy Christ, in His righteousness, there is more than enough righteousness for all. Jesus does not keep His righteousness for Himself, but He freely gives His righteousness to a world of sinners. Jesus did not die for Himself, but He died for you. Hear, listen to, heed that Gospel truth lest it be wasted on dead ears. Believe in your heart the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is your Savior! Do not resist His Holy Spirit that seeks to comfort your heart with His grace. Gladly with joy, receive with meekness the Gospel Word which is able to save your soul! His blood washes away all sin!

There can be no doubt that the man who had been born blind, joyfully received that Word. The Lord Jesus sought him out, and Jesus did not abandon that downcast and discouraged sheep. Jesus said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" "He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." There before the new eyes of this healed man, there stood Jesus, the Savior of all blind men! "And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." May the Lord our God, our Savior Jesus Christ likewise open our own blind eyes that we may see His wondrous salvation! For Jesus came into this world "that they which see not might see." Let us not be blind to our sins dear brethren. But more importantly, may our eyes be opened that we see our Savior. Amen.