

## The Man Born Blind - John 9:1-41



### Miracles/Signs

The gospel for this [4th Sunday in Lent](#) is taken from the ninth chapter of the Gospel of John. It is important to note that in John 8 one of the key points is Jesus' self-identification as the "*light of the world*." Jesus' claim to be the light of the world (8:12) is repeated in 9:5, and the healing miracle in John 9 stands as a demonstration of this claim. In addition, the *Mishnah* identifies Siloam, the water in which the blind man bathes (v.7), as the source of the water for the water libations of the Tabernacles feast, also mentioned in the previous chapter. John 8 also captures an on-going engagement with the religious authorities - an engagement which continues in conflict in John 9.

As many commentaries note, St. John uses a different word for **miracle** than the other sacred writers. The more typical words used include: *thauma* (wonder), *dunamis* (mighty work), and *terata* (portent). John does not use any of these words – he simply says *sēmeia* (sign). In the fourth gospel there are seven miracle accounts:

- (1) water into wine (2:1–11) – unique to John
- (2) healing of an official's son (4:46–54) – see also Matt 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10
- (3) healing of a paralytic at Bethesda (5:1–15) - similar to other gospel healing accounts
- (4) feeding of a multitude (6:1–14) – see also Mark 6:32–44, Matt 14:13–21 and Luke 9:10–17
- (5) walking on water (6:16–21) – see also Mark 6:45–52 and Matt 14:22–33
- (6) healing of a blind man (9:1–41) - similar to other gospel healing accounts
- (7) resurrection of Lazarus (11:1–44)

Though the number of miracles in John is fewer than in any of the Synoptic Gospels, their importance has long been recognized by scholars, even while their meaning, function, and source have been much

discussed and disputed. But there is general agreement that the signs themselves are extraordinary and point beyond themselves to the divine – not just the divine as a vague power, but to a person. They identify Jesus as the light and life of the world, the bread of life from heaven, and the “Word of God” (*logos*) who, through the signs, reveals his own glory, which is also the glory of God his Father, since he and the Father are one and since he does the Father’s will and works.

Not surprisingly, these signs evoke a variety of responses. The responses can be generalized as follows:

- (1) For some, Jesus’ wonderworking endorses him as a prophet sent by God. Jesus is critical of this type of response. When you consider what is being revealed, “prophet” is a cautious response at best. Jesus characterizes the response as untrustworthy (2:24) and wrongly motivated (6:26); ultimately, it fails (12:37). Those who give this tepid response are described as “the Jews.” A term which has a very mixed use in this gospel.
- (2) There are many places in the gospel where “the Jews” is a negative term designating those Jews who are skeptical toward or reject the signs and/or the claims Jesus makes in connection with them. Sometimes those who reject the signs are specified further as “the Pharisees” or “the rulers.” The hostility between Jesus and Jewish authorities in his day is reflected in many passages. Many believe that it also reflects conflict between the evangelist’s community and the Jews of his day.
- (3) But there are those who see Jesus’ miracles for what they are, signs identifying him as the life and light of the world, the bread from heaven, the one sent by the Father to do his works. Jesus can therefore invite belief in his works as a way of perceiving that he and the Father are one.

## Sin

In our passage, the concept of **sin** will be quickly introduced via the disciples’ question in v.2 : “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*” This reflects traditional Jewish speculation on the relationship of illness and sin. In 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine, people commonly assumed that disease and disorders on both the personal and national level were due to sin, as summarized in the rabbinic saying from around 300 CE that “there is no death without sin and there is no suffering without iniquity” (*b. shabbat* 55a).

Digging a little deeper, we can turn to the Old Testament to see how sin is understood. Based on Ex 20:5 and Dt 5:9 it is understood that God promises to punish “*children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation,*” and so it was believed, e.g. a birth defect must have been the result of parent’s (or grandparent’s) sin. This seems counter to text from Ezekiel 18:20: “*A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own*” But the conclusion might surprise you: a birth defect must have been the result of sins committed in the womb by the child. The rabbis debated whether fetuses could sin, some arguing they could (for example, *Genesis Rabbah* 63:6) and others that they could not (*Genesis Rabbah* 34:10) – a line of reasoning because of the enmity between Jacob and Esau in the womb. These two views are neatly summarized: “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*”

*Jesus answered, “Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”* (John 9:3-5)

The response seems to move away from conventional moral categories off the table and redirect the conversation to a theological or evangelical category. Theological in that the measure is one’s response

to the revelation of God in Jesus – which for John is at the heart and purpose of the signs. The man's blindness is not a source point for reflection on sin and causality, but serves the moment as a means of revelation. In a number of ways, Jesus challenges the common perception of sin:

- First of all, Jesus challenges the thinking that suffering was the direct result of sin. He says that it is neither (v.3; although 5:14 seems to suggest that sin and suffering are connected). Neither can it be assumed that because the Pharisees are healthy and have normal vision, that they are sinless.
- Secondly, he challenges the thinking that sinfulness is directly related to obeying the sabbath laws. Jesus does what is expressly forbidden – kneading; yet we know he is not a sinner. Neither can it be assumed that because the Pharisees perfectly obey the sabbath laws that they are sinless.
- Thirdly, he challenges the thinking that neither God nor the righteous (Pharisees) should listen to sinners (v.34). Neither can we assume that because the Pharisees appear to be righteous, that God listens to them more than to sinners or that they speak for God any more than sinners can speak for God.

It gives us a point around which to consider how we think about sin.

On a lighter vein, when Jesus begins the external actions that form the “sign” he uses the good things of nature that God has provided: “*When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes.*” (John 9:6) Brian Stoffregen provided an interesting insight about “after the miracle” - an interesting commentary on the human condition.

“It has been suggested that the origins of denominations occurred when the healed blind men met each other. At first they were all excited about the miracle of sight that Jesus had given them, but as they talked about how Jesus had healed them, they began to discover some significant differences. For some, the healing came with simply a touch from Jesus (Mt 9:29 ; 20:34 ). Another proudly boasted that he had enough faith so that Jesus didn't have to touch him to perform the miracle (Mk 10:52 ). Another meekly exclaimed that Jesus not only touched him twice, but also “spit on his eyes” in order for him to see clearly (Mk 8:23 ). The final one really felt embarrassed to admit that even though a touch wasn't part of his healing, Jesus' “spit” wasn't enough. Jesus had mixed his saliva with dirt and put the mud on his eyes and then told him to go and wash in some pool of water (Jn 9:6-7 ). Since each one thought his healing was normal and better than the others, they divided into spittites and non-spittites; muddites and non-muddites; touchites and non-touchites. Denominationalism was born.”

### **The Setting and Healing**

If you wanted a one sentence summary of this account – here it is: “*I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind*”(v.39). Or: as a sign that he is the light, Jesus gives sight to a man born blind. But there is a richness to be gained in a detailed look at the text and narrative. The Johannine scholar, Fr. Raymond Brown suggests the following outline:

- A. Setting (9:1-5)
- B. Miraculous healing (9:6-7)
- C. Interrogations of the blind man (9:8-34)
  1. Questioning by neighbors and acquaintances (9:8-12)
  2. Preliminary interrogation by Pharisees (9:13-17)
  3. The man's parents questioned by the Jews (9:18-23)
  4. A second interrogation of the man by the Jews (9:24-34)
- D. Jesus leads the man born blind to that spiritual sight which is faith (9:35-41)

**The Setting:** Verses 1-5 narrate the situation of need that evokes the miracle, but they provide an interesting twist on the traditional miracle story form. The man's blindness is stated as a fact in v.1, but he is not an active character in the story until v.7. He makes no request of Jesus to be healed, nor does Jesus engage in any conversation with him about his healing. Rather, the blind man's initial narrative function is as the catalyst for the conversation between Jesus and his disciples in vv. 2-5.

The metaphorical use of "day" and "night" in v. 4b signals the contingency of Jesus' presence as the *Logos* - the Johannine word used to point to the divine. Day will come to an end with the arrival of Jesus' hour. Day and night are paired in 11:9-10 with a similar metaphorical meaning. Verse 5 makes the metaphor and its contingency ("*as long as*") explicit: Jesus' presence in the "world" (*kosmos*) is the light that makes God's work possible (cf. 8:12).

**The Healing:** The sign/miracle is simply told. Many ask why Jesus used the mixture of earth/dirt and saliva to make clay and then put it on the eyes of the man? There is no simple answer. Some find an echo of the Creation story (Gen 2) – although there God breathes life into the human being. There is an part of John's gospel (John 2-3, "*the next day...the next day....the next day...the third day*") where the inspired author lays out a new creation account – one that comes to fore in the sign of broken humanity being made whole – all seen as metaphor via the man born blind. But that is theological musing and brings along more unanswered questions.

After Jesus made mud and anointed the blind man's eyes, he told him: "*Go wash in the Pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). So he went and washed, and came back able to see.*" Unlike Naaman who objected when Elisha sent him to wash in the Jordan (2 Kgs 5:10–14), the man born blind responded with unquestioning obedience when Jesus sent him to wash in the Pool of Siloam.

Water for the Pool of Siloam was channeled through Hezekiah's tunnel from the Gihon spring. The Pool of Siloam was the source of the water used in the water-pouring ceremonies during the Feast of Tabernacles. The evangelist explains that Siloam means 'Sent'. The consonants of the Hebrew verb 'to send' (*šālāh*) are the same as those of the Hebrew for Siloam (*šilôah*), which allowed popular etymology to make the link. Perhaps the evangelist added this explanation to connect the name of the Pool with the fact that Jesus sent the man there to wash, so as to make clear that the miracle occurred because Jesus sent him, not because of any healing qualities in the water itself.

It is notable that the miraculous healing does not occur in the presence of Jesus himself.

Throughout the millennia, many have seen a possible connection with washing in the pool of Siloam and Baptism. The most common parallels notes are that

- the man has been blind since birth || we are sinners from birth; and
- *epichrio* ("smeared" in vv. 6 & 11 -- its only NT use) literally means "to anoint" (*chrío*) + "on" (*epi*). (*chrío* forms the basis for words as "christ," "chrism," "christening," -- it seems to refer to Jesus' baptism in Acts 4:27 and 10:38 and possibly our baptisms in 2 Cor 1:21 and in 1 John 2:20, 27 where the noun *chrisma* is used.)

## Interrogations

There are repercussions of the healings: a series of interrogations.

If there is a "typical" pattern to any miracle account it is: (a) the situation of need, (b) the miracle, and (c) the attestation/witness to the miracle. It is here that John's telling of the story has unique features – already discussed in earlier posts considering the nature of "miracles" and "sin" in John's writing. As we work through the various interrogations, be attentive to the way people respond: the true witness, an equivocating witness, an unbeliever, the one who dodges the question, or similar responses that reveal whether the person has seen the light and is willing to live/act based upon that belief.

Questioning by neighbors and acquaintances (9:8-12). Jesus' healing of the man born blind produced an immediate visible transformation: he no longer sat and begged. Confronted with this evidence, his neighbors and those who knew him as a blind beggar asked whether this is actually the man who used to sit and beg? The man's healed presence is a source of division. The answers were various: some claimed that it indeed was the man they knew to be a blind beggar. Others said, "*No, he just looks like him.*" They thought it was impossible for a man born blind to be healed, and so distrusted their eyes—the man before them must be someone else. No one bothered to ask the man about his identity whether he was the one who used to sit and beg, but the man (born blind) himself insisted that he indeed was that man.

Once they have established that he is indeed the blind beggar they had known, they ask the obvious question of how he came to have his sight (v. 10), and he recounts what happened (v. 11) – and in so doing becomes a witness to the Light. This question will be asked four times in this story, stressing that something highly unusual has taken place, something that cannot be explained in the categories of this world. Unlike the man by the pool of Bethesda, this man realizes from the beginning that Jesus is the one who has healed him (v. 11; cf. 5:12-13), but he does not know *where* Jesus is (v. 12). This ignorance will be resolved soon enough. The deeper ignorance of the opponents, who do not know where Jesus is from (v. 30), does not improve as a result of this act of mercy and glory on Jesus' part. The man's admission of ignorance is an attribute of a true disciple, revealing him to be honest and humble. He stands in marked contrast to the Jewish opponents in this story, for they claim to know what in fact they realize they do not really know (v. 24; cf. v. 16). It is precisely this lack of integrity and self-awareness that Jesus criticizes in his conclusion to this story (vv. 39-41).

Preliminary interrogation by Pharisees (9:13-17). What follows is puzzling: the neighbors *brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind*. This action might have arisen from a desire on their part to bring to the Pharisees' attention evidence of the great miracle Jesus had performed. However, the next words foreshadow difficulties their action would create: *Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath*. Mixing saliva and dirt was regarded as kneading, and applying an unusual salve was regarded as healing. Both these actions were prohibited on the sabbath according to Pharisaic tradition. As in 5:1-18, the concern with sabbath violation reflects an issue current in Jesus' time. To violate the sabbath law was to challenge the laws that bound the Jewish covenant community together and the Pharisees' authority as interpreters of those laws. Whether intended or not, the neighbors' action provided the Pharisees with evidence against Jesus, and brought the man born blind under Pharisaic scrutiny.

Hearing the miracle was performed on the Sabbath "*the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.*" They were not interested in the miracle that had occurred, nor the benefits it procured for the man. They wanted only to know 'how' it was done, because they wanted evidence to use against Jesus. The man responded more cautiously to the Pharisees than he had to his neighbors. His narrative does not mention "kneading" or that Jesus sent him to the Pool of Siloam; only that he washed, with the result 'now I see'.

Jesus' violation of a sabbath prohibition is thus seen by some of the Pharisees as evidence of Jesus' distance from God (v. 16a). This conclusion resounds with irony (as the blind man will point out in v. 33), because the correct interpretation of the healing is as the revelation of God's works (v. 3). Some of the Pharisees, however, link this healing with other miraculous acts Jesus has performed (note the use of the plural "signs" (*semeia*), v. 16b). This schism among the Pharisees (v. 16c) echoes the divided response of the blind man's neighbors (vv. 8-9; cf. 7:12, 25-27, 31, 40-43).

Like the preceding scene with the neighbors (vv. 8-12), the Pharisees' interrogation of the man provides an opportunity for the blind man to bear witness to his healing (v.15). There is a progression

in the man's witness: earlier, he identified his healer simply as "the man called Jesus," but in this scene he identifies Jesus as a prophet (v. 17; cf. 4:19). The man's growing awareness of the truth of Jesus' identity (cf. vv.30-33, 36, 38) underscores one of the story's central theological themes: blindness is not determined simply by seeing or not seeing, but by recognizing the revelation of the works of God in Jesus (cf. vv.3,41).

*The man's parents questioned by the Jews (9:18-23).* The religious authorities are divided about Jesus and the meaning of his miracles/signs. The point of division is Jesus' disregard for their sabbath regulations and the idea that God would work through such "lawlessness." One possible way to resolve their impasse and division is to challenge the testimony of the man about his former condition – was he really blind from birth? "*Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight....*" And so they summon the man's parents and ask three questions: (a) Is this your son? (b) Was he born blind? And (c) How is he now able to see? The parents respond that he is indeed their son who was born blind, but they refuse to speculate on how he gained sight.

This is now the third time the question of "how" has been asked. But here the parents understand the question to be asking for more than what mechanism enabled him to receive his sight – and they answer cautiously: "*Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for himself.*" A Jewish boy comes of age at 13 years (*m. Niddah* 5:6) and one day and is then able to give legally viable testimony. The parents pointed out that since their son was of age he could answer for himself.

The evangelist explains why they were so cautious: "*His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Messiah, he would be expelled from the synagogue.*" This is the first of three occasions in the Fourth Gospel where belief in Jesus as the Christ is linked with the threat of expulsion from the synagogue (v.22; 12:42; 16:2).

*A second interrogation of the man by the Jews (9:24-34).* In the third and final interrogation scene, the authorities are identified only with the pronoun "they." They are clearly the same group identified as the Pharisees who interrogated the man in vv. 13-17, but the motivation for the second interrogation is also clearly linked to the parents' testimony and their rebuttal: "*...he is of age.*" The man is recalled before the elders.

Twice in this interrogation scene the authorities hold *their* knowledge up to the man and expect him to accept their positions (vv.24, 29). Each time, however, the man counters with his own experience (vv.25, 30-33). The **authorities** offer: "*We know that this man is a sinner. We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from.*" The **man-born-blind** replies: "*“If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see. This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything.”*" The fact that the man holds his ground in the face of the Jewish authorities gives this interrogation scene a markedly different cast from the preceding two (vv. 13-17, 18-23). The authorities try to intimidate the man with their status and knowledge, but he will not be intimidated.

The Jewish authorities' renewed interrogation could be seen as a fulfillment of their responsibility to gather as much evidence as possible in order to decide a case (cf. Nicodemus's request that Jesus be granted a full hearing in accordance with the law, 7:51), but their opening words make clear that their minds are made up: "*Give God the praise!*" (v. 24).

This expression is a traditional oath formula, through which a person is enjoined to tell the truth (e.g., Josh 7:19) or confess one's sin (e.g., 1 Sam 6:5; Jer 13:16) as evidence of one's worship of God. The man-born-blind is not intimidated by their opening "salvo." Ironically, the man will acknowledge



God's glory in the healing work of Jesus (vv. 30-33; cf. 1:14; 2:11; 11:4), while the authorities will turn their backs on this manifestation of God's glory.

The man does not engage the Jewish authorities in the category of their expertise (what constitutes sin according to the law; v. 25a), but instead contrasts their claim with the reality of his experience and hence his understanding (v. 25b). His refusal to bend to their knowledge is in itself a challenge to their authority, as is the content of his words. The man's insistence on what he knows confronts the Jewish authorities with a contradiction inherent in their definition of sin; their focus on the violation of the law precludes a focus on the healing (cf. 5:10-15; 7:21-24).

Verse 27 reveals that the man has not been fooled into believing that the authorities' repeated questions have anything to do with a judicious search for information. The mock earnestness of the man's response is a skillful example of Johannine ironic understatement, as he cleverly turns the authorities' inquiries against them. For the first time in this series of interrogations, the Jewish authorities become the one under examination, rather than the examiners (v.27 b-c). The man's final comment: "*Do you want to become his disciples, too?*" is calculated to taunt the authorities. One can imagine the pleasure with which the audacity of the man's question would be read by a community who saw its own story being played out in these verses.

The dialogue of John 8 is clearly echoed here as the authorities respond to the taunt that they are "*disciples of Moses.*" In Jewish literature, "disciple of Moses" occasionally appears as a designation for the rabbis. By using this designation of themselves here, the Jewish authorities stress their faithfulness to the Mosaic law. The disdain with which the authorities contrast the man's status as a disciple of Jesus (v. 28, lit., "you are a disciple of that one") with their own status makes clear that to them, one can be either a disciple of Moses or a disciple of Jesus, but not both. From the perspective of the Fourth Gospel, however, in order to be fully faithful to Moses and the promises of God to Moses, one must be a disciple of Jesus. Discipleship of Jesus as the true enactment of Mosaic discipleship was suggested in 5:45-47, where Moses was shown to be a witness to the revelation of God in Jesus. For the Fourth Gospel, faithfulness to the grace and truth available in Jesus, not faithfulness to the law, is the decisive mark of true discipleship.

The authorities continue their rebuke of the man by pointing to the superiority of Moses' relationship to God (v. 29). That God spoke to Moses is a mainstay of the Pentateuch narrative. This assertion by the authorities becomes an ironic claim for the reader of the Gospel, however, because while God may indeed have spoken to Moses, Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (1:14). The authorities' self-professed ignorance of Jesus' origins continues a theme that was prominent in John 7-8 (e.g., 7:28, 41-42; 8:23). They assume Jesus' origin is simply a matter of geography and do not perceive the theological dimension of Jesus' origins, that he comes from God (cf. 8:14). Through their assertion of their knowledge in v. 29 (cf. v. 24), the authorities in reality reveal more about their ignorance than they intend. Interestingly, one of the most vivid depictions of Jesus' origins occurs in the reworking of the Mosaic traditions in John 6, in which Jesus is identified as the true bread from heaven (6:32-35, 49.51, 58).

<sup>34</sup> *They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.* The Jewish authorities correctly characterize the man's words to them as teaching; he has indeed taken over their role as teacher of the faith. The authorities reject his teaching on the same grounds that they attempted to dismiss Jesus' healing: The man is a sinner. In the case of the man, however, the case for his sin is not built around sabbath violation, but around the traditional linkage of sin and illness (cf. 9:2). Jesus had dismissed this linkage as the appropriate category through which to interpret the man's blindness (9:3-5), and the authorities' continued adherence to this category is further proof of their distance from the revelation of God in Jesus. The expediency that

drives the authorities is also exposed in this charge, because while earlier they rejected his blindness as a way of dismissing the miracle (vv. 18.19), now they accept his blindness as a way of dismissing the man as a sinner.

### **Decision: Faith or Disbelief**

We arrive at the “fish or cut bait” moment. The authorities drive the man away (v.34), then Jesus finds the man and asks: “*Do you believe in the Son of Man?*”

Just as the Samaritan woman was confronted by Jesus with the possibility of the anticipated Messiah’s being already present (4:25-26), so also the healed man is confronted by Jesus with the possibility that the future judge is already present. To this point in John 9, the theme of the judgment evoked by the light of the world (9:5; cf. 3:17-21; 12:31-36) has largely been implicit. Jesus’ question makes this theme explicit as he asks the man whether he recognizes in his healer the one who brings salvation. As v.36 indicates, the man is ready.

Jesus’ words of self-identification in v. 37 (cf. 4:26) lead to the man’s confession of faith. This confession is the culmination of the man’s progression in faith that has run throughout chap. 9. He first acknowledged Jesus simply as the man who had healed him (v. 11), then identified him as a prophet (v. 17), then as a miracle worker from God (vv. 30-33). This progression marks a deepening of the man’s gift of sight, from the gift of physical sight to spiritual and theological sight. He now knows who and what he sees in Jesus. “Worship” (*proskyneō*) is used in John to speak of the worship of God (4:20-24; 12:20). When the man worships Jesus, then, he is acknowledging the presence of God in Jesus and thus ironically fulfills the authorities’ demand that he give glory to God (v. 24). With this act of worship, the man’s role in the story is completed and he disappears from the narrative.

In the final dialogue scene (vv. 39–41), the focus shifts from the healing miracle itself to the purpose of Jesus’ ministry as revealed in that miracle. In the final dialogue scene, the focus shifts from the healing miracle itself to the purpose of Jesus’ ministry as revealed in that miracle. Jesus defines the eschatological purpose of his incarnation (“*I came into this world for judgment, so that ...*”). As in 3:18-21, Jesus’ coming into the world as the light (9:5; cf. 1:9; 12:46) is the moment of judgment, the moment of division.

Jesus says his judgment both enlightens and blinds. He has not come for judgment in the sense of condemnation (3:17), but such condemnation does take place as he who is the light of the world is revealed. When the light shines, judgment takes place; however, salvation comes as well, for when the light of the world dawns, hearts are revealed and the truth about individuals' relationships with God is brought into the open.

It is popular knowledge that the light of the sun melts wax and hardens clay. The opponents have hard hearts--they reject God's offer of mercy and his call to repentance that come through his chastisement. Such hardness of heart darkens their minds and alienates them from the life of God (Eph 4:18). The sight they think they have must be taken from them if they are to receive true sight, which sees the true light (Jn 8:12).

Jesus’ response was not what they expected. “*If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.*” If they, like the man born blind, had been prepared to acknowledge ignorance, they, like him, would not be guilty of sin. Because they claimed to know and were unwilling to learn, their guilt remained. Their presumption of knowledge kept them from seeing the truth. They were like the one described in Proverbs 26:12: “*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*” The Pharisees were guilty of unbelief, the cardinal sin in the Fourth Gospel

*Image credit: Healing of the Man Born Blind, El Greco, 1567, Public Domain*