

Fourth Sunday in Lent

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 42:14-21

¹⁴ “For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant. ¹⁵ I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools. ¹⁶ I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. ¹⁷ But those who trust in idols, who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’ will be turned back in utter shame. ¹⁸ “Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! ¹⁹ Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the LORD? ²⁰ You have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing.” ²¹ It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious.

42:14 *For a long time.* † During the ages of the old covenant. (CSB)

I HAVE KEPT SILENT – The Lord saw the awful condition of mankind for over 3000 years. He sent messengers to warn his people and even foretell the coming of Christ. These were ignored. God retrained himself until the proper time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

Israel complains in 40:27 that Yahweh is silent (cf. Ps. 44:23). During the future Babylonian exile, the captives will resonate with this complaint. For seventy years, Yahweh will not intervene (cf. 54:7-8). In the context of 42:14, therefore, it would be an exaggeration to interpret Yahweh’ silence “for a long time as “from eternity.” But for Israel in exile, it will feel as if Yahweh has been silent forever. (CC)

Just like it must feel like an eternity for a mother who is pregnant for nine months before she suddenly delivers her child, so Israel is about to be birthed out of bondage and into a new life. For those who will be exiled in Babylon, the long night of their abandonment will give way to the morning of salvation when Cyrus permits them to return home (cf. Ps. 30:5). There will be an even longer wait of some seven centuries between the ministry of Isaiah and the birth of the Servant Messiah (Is. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1; 53:2; Mt. 1:1,23). The new exodus will be a kind of new birth (cf. 49:20-22). Israel is about to be born again (cf. Jn.3:3, 5). (CC)

held myself back. See 63:15; 64:12. The Hebrew verb is also used of Joseph, who controlled his emotions while he tested his brothers (Ge 43:31; 45:1). See 30:18 and note. (CSB)

WOMAN IN CHILDBIRTH – This is an appropriate image because it foreshadows the incarnation of the long-promised Messiah, who will come to save his people from their sins. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

In battle with His enemies, God is cast in the role of a mighty man of war (v 13). An even more daring comparison describes Him as a pregnant woman. (TLSB)

GASP AND PANT – When time of the delivery comes, a woman can cry out in desperation but cannot delay the birth of her child. Though He restrained Himself for a long time, nothing can prevent the Lord from keeping His promise to open the way of forgiveness for fallen humankind. (TLSB)

The six finite verbs in 42:14, the first five of which are asyndetic (not connected by a conjunction), make Yahweh's statements emphatic. To "shriek" like a woman in labor accents the great emotion of Yahweh's love for his people. Here is a God who rejects every form of stoic restraint. He will resort to almost anything to bring Israel back to himself. And he will be successful. Unlike earlier texts in Isaiah where the birthing process is marked by failure (e.g., 26:18; 37:3), Yahweh's newly begotten people will be free (cf. Jn. 8:36). (CC)

Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem the those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

42:15 *lay waste ... dry up*. The opposite of 35:1–2; 41:18. (CSB)

Isaiah announces that Yahweh desiccates vegetation (40:7) and dries up the dee and withers the rivers (44:27; cf. also 50:2; 51:10). Yahweh manages creation for his purpose of redemption, which will allow the exiles in Babylon to return home. (CC)

Both ideas relate to God's control over the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15). Israel crossed on dry land, but then Yahweh blew with his Spirit, and the waters covered Pharaoh and his army (Ex. 15:10). (CC)

God is moving everything that tempts our trust, so we must return and rely on the Lord and his righteousness. The mountains, hills, and high fortresses are not where we should place our confidence. The areas we cultivate are not under our control. Our nourishment comes from the Lord. He quenches our thirst, even as he did the thirst of the children of Israel in the desert. We today are not to put our trust in our surroundings either as we are reminded by floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, ice storms and the like. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

rivers into islands.† See 37:25; 44:27. (CSB)

Not an act of destruction. The Lord is leading the blind, so He removes all obstacles for such people. (TLSB)

42:16 *blind*. Israel (vv. 19–20). (CSB)

The theme of radical change continues, moving from nature to people. The powerful acts of verse 15 are in the service of the rescue of verse 16. Needing salvation are those who are blind; only as God turns darkness to light can they see and walk. This takes us back to the birthing image in 42:14. Infants leave the womb of darkness and begin living in the light of day. Just so, when the exiles leave Babylon, Israel will, in a national sense, be born again. What has been gestating for seventy years will burst forth. This is the “new thing” Yahweh is doing (43:19). In Christ, the rebirth of a new creation comes already now through God’s Word and Sacraments (Jn. 3:3-8; 1 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 6:15; Titus 3:5-6), and on a cosmic scale, after Christ returns, God will inaugurate the new heavens and new earth (Is. 65:17-25; Rev. 21-22). (CC)

These are the spiritually blind who by themselves cannot find a way. God will find a way to bring them safely to Himself. God will guide them. God will turn darkness into light. God does all this. (PBC)

paths ... not known. Way of salvation from sin. (TLSB)

The theme of the “way” is prominent in chapters 40-55. It first appears in 40:3, where a voice is called to prepare a way for Yahweh. God knows the way of understanding (40:14), while in 44:16 and 43:19, the way is likened to the path Yahweh made for Israel to pass through the Red Sea and travel safely in the desert. For this new exodus/land conquest, Yahweh will first employ a pagan king named Cyrus (44:28; 45:1), then a Servant who be rejected, killed, and rise again (52:13-53:12). God’s ways are not our ways (55:8). (CC)

Psalm 32:8: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”

Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

2 Peter 1:19, “And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

rough places smooth. See 40:4. (CSB)

I will not lead them on twisting and winding roads, but on a straight and level way. Only believe. I will guide you to the end on a straight course. If you want to follow your own ideas, your way will be nothing but curves. One idea will follow another. Follow Me; I will put a lantern in place of the darkness, a straight path instead of the crooked. This is what I will do and nothing else. Therefore commit the business to Me in all articles of faith.” Leave your reason and wisdom behind and cling to the Word and the seeing God, who will bring you through on an unknown way. The world does not do this. The people of the world open their eyes wide and would like to have 20 eyes. For them everything depends on their own resources. (Luther)

not forsake. Cf. 40:27; 49:14; 54:8. (CSB)

God had delivered His people from Egypt, He would deliver them from Babylon, and He would deliver them from the bondage of sin by the coming of this Servant, Jesus Christ. (PBC)

42:17 THOSE WHO TRUST IN IDOLS – Despite God’s care and power, idolatry will continue among those who reject the Lord and His Servant. (TLSB)

Some off the deportees must have thought, “Yahweh has left us! We will never be saved!” Such fears were groundless. It is as though Yahweh responds, “If you are looking for an absent god who is unable to rescue, do not look at me; look at Babylon gods! They are the ones who are fakes and frauds!” The empire will be brought to its knees because it trusted in false and phony deities (Is. 46-47). Idolaters will also be brought to shame, which is like becoming nothing (cf. 41:11-12). Why would any of God’s people want to join this losing team. (CC)

WILL BE TURNED BACK – This can and does happen to God’s people who turn their back on him. Saul was the prime example.

This is the opposite of faith. Those who believe are blind. Just let anyone try to harm them! But the seeing people, who by their own wisdom choose gods for themselves, shall be turned back and put to shame. Thus everything happens contrary to expectation. As for you, just continue on your way with eyes closed. The seeing ones will slide backwards in all their plans and will be put to shame. Who are they? Those who put their trust in their own gods. The prophet has the idols of his own time in view, because the Jews stubbornly clung to their idols, each set up his refuge in his own interest. (Luther)

42:10–17 Through the work of the Lord’s Servant, the song of salvation reaches all people. Because you have received the Gospel, open your mouth to confess and to sing about Jesus’ works—both His Law and His Gospel. He will lead you and never forsake you. • O Savior, open my lips, that I may declare Your praise to those near and far. Lead me in the way of peace. Amen. (TLSB)

42:18-20 Whereas the previous Servant (vv 1–9) did the work of the Lord, this one (Israel, v 24) does not. This description recalls Isaiah’s commission (6:9–13). (TLSB)

42:18 *deaf ... blind.* See 6:10 and note. (CSB)

Yahweh has disputed with idol worshipers (41:1-7) and with the idols themselves (41:21-29). Now he disputes with his own idolatrous people. His condemning words are prompted by the depiction of idolatry in 42:17, as well as by Israel’s complaint in 40:27. In light of these earlier verses, Yahweh responds by asserting this truth: “deaf,” “blind,” and “heartless” do not describe him but Israel. He heard and saw his people in Egyptian slavery and acted (Ex. 2:24-25). Now he promises to respond again, this time during the Babylonian crisis. Why can’t Israel hear and see this? Is the ominous judgment of 6:9-

10 still in force. Yes, at least to some extent. Israel had a hard heart before the exile (6:9), just as the people will after the exile (42:18-21; 43:8-9), and after they return to the land (63:17). Having unresponsive hearts to God is a constant danger for God's people at all times. (CC)

You are deaf because you do not hear the Word of God, and you are blind because you look around with your own ideas." (Luther)

42:19 *who is blind?* "Who is blind but...?" The brutal Babylonians, right? The egocentric Egyptians right? The polytheistic Persians, that's it, right? Wrong, wrong, wrong. Who is blind but my servant? (CC)

my servant. Israel. See note on 41:8–9. (CSB)

Hold on! In Is. 41:8 Yahweh reassures his people with the words "But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen." And in 42:1-4, the servant is tasked with bringing Yahweh's verdict against the idol-worshiping nations. How did the servant people begin with such a holy vocation and end blind in such abject idolatry? (CC)

Idols have a magnetism that attracted many of the Israelites into abandoning Yahweh, especially those exiled in Babylon. This resulted in the nation's double bondage. They would be captive politically to Babylon and spiritually to false gods. Israel then needed a double salvation. To free them from Babylon Yahweh provides Cyrus. To free them from sin, he gives them and the world a new Servant. (CC)

Since Babylonian deities are a farce (44:9-20) and servant Israel is blind and deaf, the only hope is in Yahweh and his true Servant, who is appointed in 49:1-6 (cf. 42:1-4). Is. 49:5-6 differentiates this Servant from the idolatrous servant Israel. "Is it too light a thing that you should be my Servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the one Israel being spared?" (49:6). The Suffering Servant will restore the blind and deaf servant because the blind cannot lead the blind (cf. Lk. 6:39), neither can the deaf hear Yahweh's voice, nor those imprisoned (Is. 42:22) free themselves. Israel broke the Sinaitic covenant, but the Servant himself is a new covenant for the people (49:8; cf. 42:6). We call this grace amazing! (CC)

Isaiah gives us two servants: the first one, Israel, is in need of rescue, while the second one is the Rescuer. After the Righteous Servant's vicarious satisfaction for the servant's sin as well as for the sins of all, his are forensically deemed righteous by Yahweh and become his "servants" (53:11; 54:17). Forgiven and cleansed by the grace of the Servant, God's people are then able to take up the role of servants anew (Is. 56:6; 65:8-15; 66:14; Lk. 12:37; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 12:5; Eph. 6:7). (CC)

Just like Israel, the disciples are blind to the mission of Jesus until he opens their eyes (e.g., Lk. 24:31, 32:45). With outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2) and with eyes wide open, they are empowered to take the Gospel "to the end of the earth" (Acts

1:8). The same movement, from blindness to sight to mission also becomes Paul's experience (Acts 9:8-18). (CC)

Those leaders, teachers, and priests who were entrusted with the message of salvation did not understand it. Therefore, they did not spread the Gospel truth to those entrusted to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

messenger I send. A term associated with prophets (see Hag 1:13; cf. Isa 44:26; Mal 3:1). (CSB)

42:20 SEEN MANY...PAID NO ATTENTION – The Lord displayed mighty acts, especially acts of deliverance in great number before the eyes of His chosen people. But Israel saw what was done but failed actually to take note of what it meant. (Leupold)

42:21 In 42:18-20, Yahweh speaks directly to his deaf and blind servant nation. During most of the rest of the chapter, he speaks about Israel in the third person since the people have refused to listen. Is 42:21 concludes 42:18-20. Even if Israel is blind and deaf, Yahweh will still bring about his purposes. (CC)

HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS – For the sake of his righteousness (cf. 48:11), he plans to continue to magnify his teaching and make it glorious. Yahweh will create so great a revelation that all nations will stream to Zion (2:1-3; cf. Deut. 4:5-8; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 14:1). (CC)

law great and glorious. Especially the law of Moses, given in the awesome setting of Mount Sinai (see Ex 34:29). (CSB)

Israel had no excuse for its failure to perform its assigned service; it knew God's will (Lk 12:47). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

5:8-14 In this passage from Ephesians Paul draws on the motif of light and darkness to urge his listeners to be a God has already made them in Christ: "children of light" (5:8). We are reminded of Christ's own words in John 9, of John's words in his first Epistle regarding be "in the light" as Christ is in the light (1 John 1:5-7), and Peter's words in his first Epistle about being called "out of darkness into (God's) wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9). Although light is not a predominant theme in Ephesians, Christ's election of

people into his church by his grace through faith certainly is. Starting with Ephesians 1:4 Paul speaks eloquently of the mysterious working of God through Christ in setting him over “all rule and authority” (1:21), calling people out of sin and slavery into a relationship with himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

5:8-9 “Darkness” and “Light” are treated as real powers at work. “Darkness” is, of course, the sinful, fallen nature, the world, and the devil. “Light” is the new life of faith begun in our Baptism in Christ and continued and strengthened by his abiding in us (Jn 6:56 from the Gospel). The “walk as children of light” is the Christian life of sanctification, the walking by faith, the carrying of the cross, to be salt and light in the world (Mt 5:13–14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

5:8 *darkness ... light.* This section emphasizes the contrast between light and darkness, showing that those who belong to him who is “light” (1Jn 1:5), i.e., pure and true, not only have their lives illumined by him but also are the means of introducing that light into the dark areas of human conduct (cf. Mt 5:14). (CSB)

Verses 3-7 warn Christians concerning six specific vices which were prevalent in the ancient world and still are much with us today. The Apostle warns his hearers that no Christian can make a habit of any of these vices and yet inherit eternal life. The unbelieving world believes that life owes them sinful pleasures. They often feel that sin and vice is their privilege. The Christian lives in a world in which the deceitfulness of sin is made to look so innocent. (Buls)

But Paul warns in verse 7: "Therefore do not be partakers with them." By "them" he means "the sons of disobedience" in verse 6.(Buls)

In Ephesians 2:1-3 Paul began by reminding his hearers what they were before they came to faith in Christ and then he proceeded, in verses 4-10, to tell them what God had done for them.(Buls)

Similarly in our text Paul reminds his hearers of what they once were and what they have become. Then he warns them not to fall back into their old ways. In fact, they have a responsibility to wake impenitent sinners up lest they lose their souls. They should walk as Children of Light. (Buls)

This verse explains why he said what he did in verses 6-7.(Buls)

Formula of Concord (Tappert 522.10): [After listing 1 Corinthians 2:2-4; 1 :21; Ephesians 4:17-18; Matthew 13:11-13; and Romans 3:11-12, states:] In this way Scripture calls the natural man simply 'darkness' in spiritual and divine things, Ephesians 5:8 and Acts 26:18. (Buls)

Note the contrast. Christians are no longer darkness. They are now light. And that is qualified by the phrase "in the Lord." Because of what Jesus did I am now light in the Lord. Look at the Third Article. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: Darkness and light in this connection do not mean misery and happiness, but here designate the contrast between sin, ungodliness, and holiness, purity. Through their conversion or regeneration Christians have been rescued from the ruination of sin, of the world, and have been transplanted into a new, holy, godly life and status. Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:5; Luke 16:8; John 12:36. (Buls)

Lenski: 'Darkness' and 'light' are really powers. They exist independently of us, and we are either darkness or light only as we are identified with the one or the other. (Buls)

The contrast in this verse is double: then-now and darkness-light. (Buls)

Paul seems to be speaking in this verse not of a situation in which Christians were before their call through the Gospel, but of their own interior condition. Christians were not in the darkness, but were darkness themselves. Now in Christ, the Christian has been made "light." The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord uses this verse along with others to show the depravity of humanity and its inability to transform itself from darkness into light on its own. "In this way Scripture calls the natural man simply 'darkness' in spiritual and divine things" (FC SG II 10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

LIVE AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT – "Walk" is a Pauline word for "live." The "light" is the motivation. That is Gospel. But the Law gives direction. That is obligation. (Buls)

When Paul says, "(They) were once darkness," he is taking it a step farther. Not only were they misled and under the influence of wicked paganism, they themselves were a bad influence. They were the darkness that misled others to practice and even enjoy gross immorality and wickedness. (PBC)

Understanding Paul's metaphor about darkness makes the parallel metaphor regarding light all the more striking. The Ephesians were not only enlightened by knowing Christ; they themselves have become light. Not only were they influenced by his gospel, but they themselves are now the influence that builds up their brothers in the church and wins new converts. (PBC)

Remember Christ's declaration to His disciples: "You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13,14). He didn't say, "You really should be the salt of the earth" or "strive to become the light of the world." He said, "You are the light of the world." Because God's people are light, Paul can urge, live as children of light. (PBC)

5:9 *fruit of the light*. A mixed metaphor, but the meaning is clear. Light is productive (consider the effect of light on plant growth), and those who live in God's light produce

the fruit of moral and ethical character (cf. Gal 5:22–23), while those who live in darkness do not (see v. 11). (CSB)

A common NT image for good works and deeds that flow naturally from one planted in Christ (John 15:1-8; Col. 1:10). (TLSB)

RSV has: "The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true." TEV: "For it is the light that brings a rich harvest of every kind of goodness, righteousness, and truth." AAT: "Light produces everything good and righteous and true." (Buls)

By the way, when a person walks in constant repentance (confessing his sins and trusting in Jesus' blood) his sins are constantly forgiven and God sees nothing but his good works. Look at 1 John 1:7 and Ephesians 2:10. The Christian is at one and the same time saint and sinner. But read Galatians 2:20.(Buls)

Here Paul describes the nature of true "light." It consists of goodness, righteousness, and truth. Melancton in his Apology of the Augsburg Confession felt that these three characterized the very image of God, since God Himself "light" (1 John 1:5; Ap. II 20). Truth is specifically that which is "not concealed," but which represents a real "state of affairs" (TDNT, 37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Many commentators make this verse a parenthesis. Verse 9 explains what Paul meant when he said: "Walk as children of light." Perhaps our text has been influenced by Galatians 5:22. What does the Light or the Spirit produce? Fruit. It is the very opposite of the sin mentioned in verse 3-4. (Buls)

Whereas in Galatians 5:22 we have nine, here we have only three items. And, as in Galatians 5:22, these nouns overlap in meaning. All of them denote sanctification. (Buls)

IN ALL GOODNESS – Stoeckhardt: 'Goodness' all that is morally good and proper. 'Righteousness' is moral uprightness. 'Truth' is moral truth and purity. (Buls)

RIGHTEOUSNESS – Lenski: 'Goodness' means all genuine moral excellence . . . The righteous walk in all righteousness. The approval of this Judge rests upon them. Paul's circle is closed by 'truth' which is verity, reality, namely spiritual and moral reality, as opposed to all lying perversion, sham, deception, pretense. (Buls)

TRUTH – Kretzmann: Goodness in all its forms, moral soundness and propriety, combined with active beneficence; righteousness-moral rectitude, which takes care that nothing and nobody receives any injury; truth-moral purity, sincerity and integrity as opposed to hypocrisy and falsehood. (Buls)

5:10 FIND OUT WHAT PLEASES THE LORD – dokimazo means to approve after examination. In every case Christians are to examine carefully, exactly, what is pleasing to the Lord to whom they belong. It does not always appear at once what before God is good and right. A constant examination or investigation before the eyes of the Lord is necessary. Everything Christians come in contact with in life is to have the Christian standard of God's holy will be applied. The practical rule of the Christian life must be to please Christ. (PC)

ESV has "discern." It literally means to "test," by the standard of God's Word (Rom. 2:18; 12:2; Php. 1:9-10). (TLSB)

Stoeckhardt: In every case Christians are to examine carefully, exactly, what is pleasing to the Lord to whom they belong . . . It does not always appear at once what before God is good and right . . . A constant examination or investigation before the eyes of the Lord is necessary.(Buls)

Lenski 'Test' or 'find out' is used of testing metals, whether they are genuine, of coins, whether they are of the real metal and of full weight . . . Endless deception offers what is morally rotten as though it were perfectly sound. Test every thought, word, and act.(Buls)

Well said. Satan, the father of lies, has filled the world with that which is rotten, untrue, unreal. The Christian needs constantly to be on his guard. (Buls)

Kretzmann: To everything that they come in contact with in life, the Christians apply the standard of God's holy will. For often the difference between right and wrong is not immediately obvious. (Buls)

Christians should never rush in where angels fear to tread. "Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." The point is that it often takes effort and careful deliberation to make mature decisions as to proper courses of action. (Buls)

The opposite of deception (v 6) is the "discerning" or testing out what is pleasing to the Lord. The apostle John encouraged this when he wrote, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 Jn 4:1). Such testing, of course, is in the light of God's revealed Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

To find out what is well-pleasing to the Lord is to examine what is acceptable and divinely approved. Euairetos, well-pleasing, is not the same word used in the baptismal and transfiguration accounts of the Gospels. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

This could give the impression that there is considerable unclarity as to what pleases the Lord, and it is our task to discover it. Actually, the Greek verb in this phrase might

better be translated “approve” or “put your stamp of approval on.” The sense of the sentence would be: Live as children of the light and put your stamp of approval on what please God. What pleases God is the fruit that light produces, namely goodness, righteousness and truth. (PBC)

Matthew 3:17, “And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Romans 12:1-2 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Hebrews 13:16, “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

1 John 4:1 “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

5:11 *Have nothing to do with.* See v. 7. (CSB)

This verse contains a prohibition and a command. The negative forbids a continual and habitual act. Here it does not denote ceasing what they are already doing. It forbids constant association with fruitless works of darkness as a way of life. And note that the object of both prohibition and the command is "deeds" not "people." (Buls)

The verb "have nothing to do with" is used here and in Philippians 4:14 and Revelation 18:4. In no instance does it denote fellowship or association with people. Paul does not say that we should have no association at all with the unconverted. That is impossible. The world being what it is we must associate with all kinds of people. But, we should have nothing at all to do with the kinds of works here described. (Buls)

The *summetochoi* (“partnership” or “association”) of v 7 is interpreted as *sungkoinōneite* (“fellowship”) in v 11. This is similar to 2 Cor 6:14, where Paul memorably says, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship (*koinōnia*) has light with darkness?” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Psalm 1:1, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.”

DEEDS OF DARKNESS – Sexual immorality. (TLSB)

The power of darkness causes and produces the fruitless works. We think here of John 3:19-21. We think also of Matthew 7:22-23, a remarkable passage. If works are not

done by faith in Jesus, He will pronounce them wickedness on judgement day. They are like the chaff which the wind drives away. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The darkness, the unconverted state, the condition of unbelief, can bring forth real fruit as little as weeds are able to; the works of darkness are unfruitful, they are destructive, wicked, dead, Hebrews 6:1; 9:14; Colossians 1:2. (Buls)

expose. Light, by nature, exposes what is in darkness, and the contrast shows sin for what it really is. (CSB)

Discern and condemn them with God's Law (v. 13; Ps. 119:105; John 3:20; 16:8). (TLSB)

μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγγετε—The verb ἐλέγγω, “to bring to light, expose,” draws on the metaphor of light. Because Christians “are light” (5:8; “enlightened,” 1:18), they have the ability to shine into the darkness to disclose the evil that lurks there. Central to the light/darkness metaphor is the fact that light always triumphs over darkness; darkness has no ability to extinguish light (cf. Jn 1:5). Nothing can remain hidden in the dark (Is 29:15; Dan 2:22). The connection of light with the Word of God (Ps 119:105; cf. Is 9:7 [ET 9:8]) implies an objective standard for this process, the “real life” application of the image. The process of δοκιμάζοντες, “testing,” to see what is pleasing to the Lord (Eph 5:10) takes place by comparing the words and deeds of the world around us with the teachings of Holy Scripture. ἐλέγγω (5:11) not only means to show these deeds for what they are (Jn 3:20; Eph 5:13) but also implies “reproving” or “convicting” the perpetrators on the basis of God's Law. Thus, the Christian is enabled to flee evil and at the same time to serve as God's instrument in unveiling his eschatological judgment and calling the world to repentance. (CC)

"Expose" is to bring to light, to reveal hidden things, to convict or convince, to reprove, to correct, to punish, to discipline. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: Not only should any participation in this sin be avoided, one is not only to beware of taking part in these sins, but the Christian is to oppose them aggressively and, in fact, so energetically is he to oppose them that he actually conquers this sin. It is the duty of Christians, the children of light, to reprove the works of darkness, refute the talk of the children of darkness, and prove to them that their works are evil. According to 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9-13, and 2:15 this is the duty of the Christian and bishop. However, it is also a part of the duty and calling of all Christians. (Buls)

Lenski: As far as others are concerned, two things are mentioned, no fellowship with their evil works, reproof exposing their shamefulness. . . Look at 2 Corinthians 6:14: 'What fellowship is there for light with darkness?' Here 'the darkness' is the direct opposite of 'the light.' Both are definite, both are powers The one has fruit, the other is unfruitful . . . Who wants to spend a life working a field which produces no fruit at all? (Buls)

It is not enough to abstain. The Christians does more than merely to abstain. RSV: "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." NEB: "Take no part in the barren deeds of darkness, but show them up for what they are." NASB: "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them." (Buls)

Paul states that the works of darkness are *akarpos*, unfruitful. They ultimately lead not to the edification and strengthening of people in themselves and in their relationships, but in a loss of goodness, righteousness, and truth. These unfruitful deeds must be exposed, a difficult task in the live-and-let-live culture of North America. How difficult is it for us to take in the words of Prov. 27:5-6: "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

Matthew 10:26 "So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known."

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."

5:12-13 The light exposes shameful deeds that are done in secret. Wrapped up in this verse are the three characteristics of light: goodness, righteousness, and truth. Nothing good can be shameful, nothing done in secret can be righteous, and lies cannot stand to be made visible. Perhaps the chief sin is the lie; light and truth are so intimately related in the Gospels, especially John, and Paul reinforces this connection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

It is one thing to avoid falsehood, deception, and evil. It is another thing to expose it (*elenchō*). As in Luther's theology of the cross, this is to call things what they are with the resulting shame (*aischron*) of those who do the evil. This is the result of our living as "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14). It is, of course, our hope and prayer that the light of God's Word will bring about repentance and faith in others. But that is God's activity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Actually, verses 12 and 13 go together as a unit. Verse 12 tells us why we have the prohibition and the command stated in verse 11. Verse 13 tells us how Christians deal with such a situation. Two things must be mentioned which Paul is *not* saying: (Buls)

He is not saying that to mention these sins or even to describe them is wrong in itself, for Paul did that very thing, for example, in Romans 1:18-32; (Buls)

He is not saying that everything which is done in private is sinful. For example, the God-pleasing intimacies of husband and wife in private are certainly not sinful. (Buls)

5:12 *shameful ... to mention.* Christians should not dwell on the evils that their lives are exposing in others. (CSB)

The stress in verse 12 lies on the word "shameful." The deeds done in private are shameful because they are the opposite of the God-pleasing deeds mentioned in verse 9. We translate literally: "For it is a shameful thing even to dwell upon what goes on among them in secret." People hide such things because they are a disgrace to themselves. Paul is speaking of a constant way of life. And "to dwell upon our speaking thereof." "In secret" is "avoiding the light." (Buls)

DO IN SECRET –The stress in verse 12 lies on the word "shameful." The deeds done in private are shameful because they are the opposite of the God-pleasing deeds mentioned in verse 9. We translate literally: "For it is a shameful thing even to dwell upon what goes on among them in secret." People hide such things because they are a disgrace to themselves. Paul is speaking of a constant way of life. And "to dwell upon our speaking thereof." "In secret" is "avoiding the light." (Buls)

5:13–14 EXPOSED BY THE LIGHT – phaneroutai can refer to fact that, in consequence of the reproof of sin, both their public and their secret sins are made manifest and revealed to the servants of sin themselves, which amount to bringing about in them a consciousness of sin. Paul does not mean that the Christian publishes the secret sins of people. He is talking about making the perpetrators see the true nature of their sins, whether they admit it or not. – The idea seems to be that when light (Christian truth) exposes the evil, there is a possibility that the person caught in darkness might repent and come to the light.

God's Word not only exposes evil but can transform evil persons into good. (TLSB)

In this verse we are told how Christians carry out what is commanded in the last part of verse 11. NASB translates: "But all things become visible when they are exposed to light." TEV: "And when all things are brought out to the light, then their true nature is clearly revealed." (Buls)

Paul does not mean that the Christian publishes the secret sins of people. He is taking about making the perpetrators see the true nature of their sins, whether they admit it or not. (Buls)

What is meant by "the light" here? The testimony of the Christian, the Word of God, the second use of the Law. (Buls)

5:13 *everything ... visible.* By the repetition of these words, Paul seems to be stressing the all-pervasive nature of the light of God and its inevitable effect. (CSB)

Stoeckhardt: This reproof forces, as it were, the sinners to face their own iniquity and shame. For 'exposed' can refer only to the fact that, in consequence of the reproof of sin, both their public and their secret sins are made manifest and revealed to the

servants of sin themselves, which amounts to bringing about in them a consciousness of sin.(Buls)

Lenski: Paul is not speaking of the saving effect of 'the light' and of our reproof of secret sins. So far he insists only on our steady reproof. We as children of light MUST reprove sins and vice, our very nature requires no less.(Buls)

Bengel: That their vileness may be known whether those who have done them scorn reproof, or repent. (Buls)

5:14 LIGHT THAT MAKES EVERYTHING VISIBLE – And now Paul buttresses verse 13 with an axiom, a principle in nature which is readily understood by everyone: "For what is brought into the open is light." The secrecy can no longer benefit or hide what has been done. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: If he becomes conscious of his sin and misery in sin, he may in this way be brought to enter upon the path which leads away from sin and leads to God, so that he now lives and walks to please God in all things, that he becomes light as Christians are light. We find the same combination of things in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25. Prophecy (teaching), within the Christian Church, has the effect of reproofing an unbeliever who is present and to reveal his secret sins to himself, and in this way, in this manner, he may come to give glory to the God of the Christians and be converted to Him. (Buls)

By the way, that's what 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 is all about. The people were not using Law and Gospel properly. They were not edifying people. They were using their God-given gifts for self-glorification. (Buls)

The effect of our witness is to call people to repentance and faith. Paul quotes a Christian hymn of the time. It is similar to quoting st 2 of *LSB* 684, "Come unto Me, ye wand'ers, And I will give you light," or other hymns of invitation that speak of rising from unbelief to faith. Speaking to one another by quoting hymns is precisely what Paul urges in the verses that follow! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Isaiah 26:19 "But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead."

it is said. What follows may well be a hymn used by the early Christians (see note on Col 3:16). (CSB)

And now we come to the final three lines of this verse which are introduced by the words "it is said." In Ephesians 4:8 these words introduce a quotation from the Old Testament, but here the source is in question. Some suggest a possible reference to an Apocryphal book or to Isaiah 26:19 or Isaiah 60:1. However, the New Testament does not quote Apocryphal books and most scholars doubt a reference to either of the Isaiah passages. Stoeckhardt does not rule out a reference to a Christian hymn. (Buls)

Lenski: The hesitation about regarding this as a couplet taken from a Christian hymn used in Ephesus in Paul's time ought to disappear.(Buls)

Kretzmann: This quotation is not taken from Scriptures, but may have been a verse adapted from synagogue or Christian liturgy of Paul's day or Paul applied a common greeting of the Jewish New Year to the situation.(Buls)

It is considered poetry by the majority of the English translations. We leave it at that. (Buls)

It must be admitted that the three lines are poetic. Perhaps Paul is using an existing hymn. But the true Lutheran exegete ought to be careful when it comes to the whole matter of "early Christian hymns." The higher critics call Luke 1:67-79 (the Benedictus) an "early Christian hymn." But that can't be because we are plainly told in verse 67 that the Holy Spirit filled Zacharias with the result that he spoke forth. The Holy Spirit is the author of these words. (Buls)

For decades Philippians 2:6-11 has been called a hymn, either pagan or Christian. But the authorities cannot agree on the Greek metrics and, what is worst of all, they completely destroy the meaning of this passage which is so important for the doctrine of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. (Buls)

But, back to Ephesians 5:14. The first two lines are a command, the third a promise. For his own good, the Christian is trying to shake the unconverted sinner out of his dull sloth. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: The Christian is to call to his unbelieving, ungodly neighbor: 'You are asleep in your sins, you are slumbering in the midst of death and destruction. But awake from this sleep, arise from the dead, repent, be converted!' . . . Recognition of sin is a prerequisite of this arising from the sleep of sin and death, and precedes conversion . . . Christ is here presented as a rising Light, a shining Constellation or Star, as the Sun of grace . . . It is exactly this promise of grace which awakens the sinner from his sleep of sin and of death, gives him spiritual power, and makes him willing to obey the call. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The sinner, having arisen from the sleep of sin and death, is surrounded and flooded with Christ, the Sun of Salvation, and thus becomes blessed and happy in this illumination. (Buls)

Lenski: This is the Gospel call of grace, of the *gratia sufficiens*, ever filled with quickening power (2:5) to raise up those whom it bids to arise . . . Beside the negative appears the positive: 'and there shall shine forth upon thee Christ' . . . Here is the same gracious and efficacious call as in Matthew 11:28-30. Subject and verb are transposed, both are thus made emphatic . . . We have had 'the light.' Here we see that this is Christ. As in John 1:4 life and light are combined in Christ. (Buls)

WAKE UP - The verb for arise, *anistmui*, is the verb for resurrection. Here it would seem that Paul is jumping from the present life to the life to come. This may be in part because we have failed to see how the new life in us now is the life that will come into full view in the next world. It is sin, the great deception, that continues to hide our true nature as saints not only from the world but sometimes even from us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

Death, even sinners' spiritual, death is like sleep to God (cf. Mk. 5:39-42; John 11:11; 1 Thess. 4:14). Through Baptism, Christ resurrected us (Eph. 2:1-6; Romans 6:4).

sleeper ... dead. Two images that describe a sinner (cf. 2:1). (CSB)

Christ will shine on you. With his life-giving light. (CSB)

He will be enveloped by the rays of Christ, the Sun of salvation. In this splendor he will be joyful and blessed as in the day. And this promise of grace it is that awakens the sinner from sleep and death, that grants him power, that makes him willing to obey the call. (Stoekhardt)

GOSPEL – John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. ⁴ As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶ Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ⁷ “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

9:1-41 The carefully constructed gospel of John records only seven miraculous *sēmeia*, “signs,” performed by Jesus. Our chapter records the sixth. These “signs” point beyond themselves, from the gift to the Giver, leading us to ask, What does this sign reveal about Jesus? The broad context of our chapter extends to Jn 20:30–31 (RSV): “Jesus did many other signs . . . which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” How, then, does this sign lead us to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The Law/Gospel theme of darkness/light, introduced in Jn 1:4, extends throughout the gospel. It is prominent in 7:14–8:59, the section preceding our text, in which controversy over Jesus arises at the Festival of Tabernacles. The conflict is brought to a head by Jesus’ messianic claim, “I am the light of the world” (8:12). Chapter 9 continues this controversy (*schisma*, “schism, division,” 9:16). The theme of light versus darkness also continues as Jesus, “the light of the world” (9:5), brings sight and light—both physical and spiritual—to a man born blind in darkness—again, both physical and spiritual.

Opposition occurs, as it did in chapters 7 and 8, and will in chapter 10, when John will move from light to the metaphors of the door and the Good Shepherd. All this opposition is part of Jesus' movement toward the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

In John 7–8, Jesus is teaching in the temple. He shines as the light of the world (8:12) by his teaching, yet the Jews purposely close their eyes. They reject Jesus to the point of attempting to stone him (8:59). Leaving the temple unharmed, Jesus passes by a man blind from birth in the text for this Sunday. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:1–12 Jesus performed more miracles of this kind than of any other. Giving sight to the blind was predicted as a Messianic activity (Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). Thus these miracles were additional evidence that Jesus was the Messiah (20:31). (CSB)

9:1-7 The gospels record many instances of Jesus giving sight to the blind. This miracle was an act of God and a sign of the Messianic age (Is 29:18; 35:5; 42:7; 61:1 LXX; Lk 4:18; 7:22). Our chapter is the only account in John's gospel of Jesus giving sight to a blind man (though general references occur in Jn 10:21; 11:37; cf. 5:3). This sign declares Jesus to be Messiah and Lord, come as the Son of the Father, into a world of darkness, to be the "light of the world" (1:4, 9; 8:12; 9:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The disciples expect their question about the man's blindness to be answered as a matter of cause and effect. They see the effect, the blindness, and conclude there has to be a specific sinful cause. Jesus has other ideas. Jesus desires that the spotlight shine on him because he is "the light of the world" (v 5; see also 8:12). His method of healing would only seem to make matters worse: spit and mud in the man's eyes. But like Naaman in 2 Ki 5:14, the man washes in a specific body of water, the pool of Siloam, according to the Lord's word. The man sees. Siloam is from Is 8:6, where the Israelites reject the blessings flowing out of Jerusalem. John translates Siloam as "Sent" or "Sent One." The one on whom the spotlight shines is Jesus, the light of the world, through a miraculous deed that only God could do (v 33). As the Pharisees did not recognize Jesus as the light through Jesus' words, so do they not recognize Jesus as the light through the miracle (10:37–38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

This healing has four unique features, each of which is significant:

1. The man was blind from birth. All of us are spiritually blind from birth, in need of God's forgiveness and light to give us sight. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

2. The reason for blindness is discussed. In v 2 the disciples offer two Law-based reasons. The man's condition must be the result of sin, they reason, but since an unborn child would have had little opportunity to commit actual sins, they surmise that

perhaps his parents' sins were responsible. Jesus rejects both suggestions and says the blindness is an opportunity for the Gospel to shine forth and God's work to be done while it is still day (vv 3–4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

3. Jesus uses means (spittle and clay) to heal. Most Reformed commentators, and even Lenski (pp. 679–82) are at a loss to explain the significance of Jesus' means. In Mk 7:33 Jesus used his spittle to heal a speechless man, and in Mk 8:23 Jesus healed a blind man by means of spittle and laying on his hands, but without clay. Here, Jesus' act with the spittle and clay is termed "anoint" in both v 6 and v 11 (*epichriō*, "to anoint," 9:6, 11; NIV: "put it on"). This anointing, together with the washing, may point to the later anointing of Christians with the Holy Spirit through Jesus' breath (Jn 20:22) and in Holy Baptism. Cf. Jesus' "anointing" of Christians with the Spirit (*chrisma*, 1 in 2:20, 27; *chriō*, "to anoint," 2 Cor 1:21–22), and Jesus anointed (*chriō*, "to anoint," Lk 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb 1:9). All of these passages allude to Holy Baptism as the means. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The Pharisees would have considered Jesus to violate several of their regulations (v 16). On the Sabbath they prohibited both anointing and healing, and they probably considered Jesus' making of the clay mixture to be the "work" of kneading, which they prohibited on the Sabbath (Talmud references in Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] p. 480, note 17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

4. Jesus told the man to wash in the pool of Siloam, which means "sent" (*shalach*). John frequently describes Jesus as the one "sent" (from *apostellō*) by the Father, so Jesus' words and deeds are of the Father. Interestingly, it was a practice at the Festival of Tabernacles to pour on the altar water from the Pool of Siloam. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

9:1 AS HE WENT ALONG – Specific location not given. Since it was on the Sabbath (v 14), it was likely the temple area. (TLSB)

This story is simply the continuation of the previous narrative, for the events here told occurred as Jesus passed along, probably out of the Temple, near whose gates many beggars were wont to assemble. It so happened that His eye rested upon a blind man. It is a peculiarity of God's providence that He often manifests His power in little incidents which seem to us chance happenings. The man that drew the attention of Jesus had been blind from his birth. (Kretzmann)

9:2 who sinned ... ? The rabbis had developed the principle that "There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity." They were even capable of preexistent state. They also held that terrible punishments came on certain people because of the sin of their parents. As the next verse shows, Jesus plainly contradicted these beliefs. (CSB)

Many people believed that suffering resulted from a specific sin. The man's blindness would therefore be punishment for a particular sin of his parents or some sin he committed in the womb. (TLSB)

The disciples, who also noticed the poor unfortunate man, voiced the opinion of the general public when they asked Jesus whether his affliction was due to some sin which he himself had committed or to some fault of his parents. Their question gives Jesus an opportunity to repudiate the popular belief as though each particular sickness or sorrow is traceable to some particular sin. It is true in general, of course, that sin has been followed by all manner of physical ailments and weaknesses, which are in themselves only forerunners of death, the wages of sin. It is true, also, that certain sins, especially those of impurity, will bring direct punishment to the body. But to scent exceptional transgression whenever any severe misfortune or sickness strikes an individual or a family, is almost invariably an injustice and savors of the judging and condemning against which the Lord warns. Cp. Luke 13, 1-5. (Kretzmann)

9:3 THIS HAPPENED SO – All imperfections result from sin but there is not a one-to-one correlation. Jesus had come to save this man and not punish him so this was be that opportunity.

Not merely restoration of physical sight (v. 7), but deliverance from spiritual darkness. (TLSB)

Jesus therefore taught His disciples the truth with regard to this man and all other unfortunate sick people. In this special case, for instance, the work of God, His power and might, should become manifest. (Kretzmann)

9:4 we. Not Jesus only. (CSB)

AS LONG AS IT DAY – Work must be done while there opportunity is available.

And the Lord added that He, or, according to some manuscripts, we, His followers, together with Him, are under obligation to work, to carry out the works of Him that sent Christ into the world. There is no false understanding as to the nature and scope of the work and office which He must perform in the world, nor is there the slightest hesitation as to attacking the work with all the willingness of a heart bound up in God's will. The present time is the day of Christ; now is the time of grace; now He must be about His own and His Father's business. That same spirit must live in the followers of Christ, that must characterize all their efforts for the spread of the Kingdom and all their work in the interest of the kingdom of God. Every bit of time, every ounce of strength should be thrown into this most important work. For soon the night of death will come, and that will definitely put a stop to all work with and for the Lord. (Kretzmann)

NIGHT – Elsewhere in John carries overtones of spiritual darkness (3:2; 11:10; 13:30). (TLSB)

9:5 WHILE I AM IN THE WORLD – kosmo means that “among men.”

OF THE WORLD – This kosmou is an objective genitive and means “sinful men.”

the light of the world. See note on 8:12. (CSB)

As for Himself, Jesus states that His choice and its obligation were clear to Him; as long as He is in the world, His office of being the Light of the world must not cease. That work He had explained at length to the Jews, and the trend of the conversation here recalled the explanation. The reference would tend to increase the emphasis of His willingness to work for the benefit and salvation of the world. (Kretzmann)

9:6 SPIT ON THE GROUND, MADE SOME MUD – Jesus violated the rabbinic rules concerning the Sabbath. The rabbis listed kneading dough among 39 forms of work forbidden on the Sabbath, a law though also to cover the mixing of earth and saliva. (TLSB)

PUT IT ON THE MAN'S EYES – In ancient times, salvia was thought to have curative powers (e.g., how animals clean themselves). (TLSB)

Jesus used variety in his cures.

And now Jesus proceeded deliberately to perform the miracle of healing the blind man, who had undoubtedly heard every word of the conversation, with the sweetness of its Gospel-message. (Kretzmann)

9:7 Siloam. Already an ancient name (see NIV text note on Ne 3:15; see also Isa 8:6). A rock-cut pool on the southern end of the main ridge on which Jerusalem was built, it served as part of the major water system developed by King Hezekiah. (CSB)

Part of a system that brought water from Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley to an upper and lower pool in Jerusalem. The Siloam pool was surrounded by a courtyard and was likely larger than it is today. (TLSB)

The little pool of Siloam was mightier than the Euphrates River. It was a type of Christ, as John explains in parenthesis. Christ was the One Sent.

He formed a paste by moistening a little clay with spittle from His mouth, placed it upon the eyes of the blind man, and then sent him down to the pool Siloam to wash. The pool Siloah, or Siloam, was the one from which the water was taken on the day of the great Hosannah, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, whose pouring out symbolized the sending of the Spirit. Jesus in this case arranged the circumstantial details at such unusual length in order to emphasize that the healing was performed by Him. The blind man, whose faith in Jesus had meanwhile been firmly grounded, did not hesitate for a moment to carry out the orders of Christ. He went away and washed himself and returned seeing. (Kretzmann)

Sent. Or “one who has been sent.” (CSB)

Reminds the reader that Jesus is the sent by the Father and the blind man was sent by Jesus – wordplay that brings the story together around the theme of sending. (TLSB)

SO THE MAN WENT – oun is responsive. That he went shows that he believed.

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” So they were divided. ¹⁷ Finally they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

9:13-17 The Light of the world also brings judgment against those who reject the Light and prefer darkness instead. The Pharisees were blinded by their legalism and self-righteousness. One group of the divided Pharisees argues from the Sabbath breach, the other from the miracle. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

Both faith and opposition grow. Note the progression of the healed man’s faith. First he says Jesus is a man (v 11), then a prophet (v 17), then a righteous man sent from God and doing the will of God (vv 30–33); finally, the healed man believes in and worships Jesus as the Son of Man (vv 35–38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

Note an opposite progression with the Pharisees. First they say Jesus is a Sabbath-breaker (v 16) not from God (vv 16, 29). They doubt his miracle (v 18), and agree to expel any who confess Jesus as the Christ (v 22). Then they put the healed man under oath and assert that Jesus is a sinner (v 25). Finally they are shown to be ignorant as they are taught by the healed man, whom they expel (v 34), and Jesus declares them to be (spiritually) blind sinners (vv 40–41). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

Unable to talk to Jesus, the people seek out the Pharisees. They should know how this happened. John makes a point of telling us that the healing occurred on a Sabbath and that mud was made as part of the treatment. Jesus had already been criticized for his Sabbath work (5:18) and claiming to be equal with God. Some attempt to discredit Jesus again by accusing him of sinning, by working on the Sabbath. Others draw the conclusion that such a sign could never be done by a sinner, thus dividing the Jews. So they ask the man who had been healed what he says about Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:13 *Pharisees.* See notes on Mt 3:7; Mk 2:16; Lk 5:17. (CSB)

The matter was of such importance that the people deemed it their duty to bring the man to the rulers of the people, among whom the Pharisees were the most prominent. (Kretzmann)

The preceding events were so extraordinary that religious authorities had to be consulted for their opinion. (TLSB)

9:14 Sabbath. Cf. 5:16 and the discussion that follows. (CSB)

Jesus deliberately healed him on the Sabbath to make them look at their own perverted religion.

To these sticklers for external forms and observances the most important point was of course this, that the healing had been done on a Sabbath. (Kretzmann)

9:15 PHARISEES ALSO ASKED – he had already been asked in verse 10. He answers with a second rehearsal of the facts.

The mixing of the clay, in their estimation, was the work of a mason, and the order to the man to go and wash himself an unnecessary piece of work. So the Pharisees promptly took the man and cross-questioned him as to how he had received his sight. The man's testimony was not to be shaken. He gave them the same account which he had given the neighbors. And the hypocrites immediately pounced upon the fact that the healing had been done on the Sabbath; that was the charge against the Healer. Jesus had, as it seems, purposely performed the miracle on the Sabbath, in order to give offense to the Pharisees. He gave these malicious people, that refused to accept the truth, reasons to become ever more offended and thus to fulfill the measure of their transgressions. That is the terrible punishment of unbelief, the self-hardening of the heart. But some of the members of the Sanhedrin, whose spiritual insight had not been altogether lost, made the hesitating remark: How can a sinner do such signs ? (Kretzmann)

9:16 THIS MAN IS NOT FROM GOD – They were saying that he was an outcast because he had broken the rules of the Sabbath.

Some ... others. The first group started from their entrenched position and ruled out the possibility of Jesus' being from God. The second started from the fact of the "miraculous signs" and ruled out the possibility of his being a sinner (cf. vv. 31–33). (CSB)

Two schools of thought divided the Pharisees. Some questioned Jesus' authority by focusing on His alleged violation of Sabbath law. Others argued that only one sent from God could perform such a miracle (cf Ac 5:38–39). (TLSB)

They felt that God would not permit an open transgressor of His holy Law to go unpunished, much less give to him such unusual powers to perform miracles. The result of the entire discussion was that there was a division in the council, they could not come to an agreement in their judgment of the case. (Kretzmann)

9:17 *What have you to say about him?* It is curious that they put such a question to such a person; their doing so reflected their perplexity. (CSB)

a prophet. Probably the highest designation of which the man could think. He progressed in his thinking about Jesus: from a man (v. 11), to a prophet (v. 17) who might be followed by disciples (v. 27), to one “from God” (v. 33), to one who was properly to be worshiped (v. 38). (CSB)

The blind man’s faith and confession will reveal a deeper understanding of Jesus (v. 33). At this point, he can at least state the obvious: Jesus is at minimum a prophet, a man sent from God with extraordinary powers. (TLSB)

For a digression, they asked the former blind man what he thought of his benefactor. He did not hesitate for a moment to confess Christ, whom he had never seen, as a great prophet sent by God, thus ascribing his healing to God. The enemies of Christ are always on the lookout for some way of discrediting the miracles of the Gospel, but they have no success; the Word of God stands too secure. (Kretzmann)

³⁴ **To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.** ³⁵ **Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”** ³⁶ **“Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”** ³⁷ **Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”** ³⁸ **Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.** ³⁹ **Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”**

9:34 *threw him out.* May mean “expelled him from their assembly” or, more probably, “excommunicated him” (see note on v. 22). (CSB)

The former blind man's frankness enraged the Pharisees beyond measure. They now cast the popular belief into his face, telling him that his blindness was due to sin, and reproaching him with his calamity. That is the manner of unbelievers. When they are no longer able to contradict plain facts, they have recourse to vile insinuations and malicious blasphemies. And the Pharisees, in addition to their other insult, cast him out of the room where they had their sessions and took the first steps to put him out of the congregation as well. They willfully, deliberately closed their eyes against the plain facts that were before their eyes; they denied their reality; they throttled their own conscience. All their actions were a product of hypocrisy of the rankest kind, blasphemy without parallel. (Kretzmann)

9:35-38 Jesus' final self-revelation results in faith, trust, and worship. Chrysostom observes: "The Jews cast him out from the Temple, and the Lord of the Temple found him." He was cast out of the darkness and into the Light. Calvin in commenting on these verses cites the example of Luther, who resisted the religious powers of his day (darkness), was excommunicated, was drawn into the Light, and came to know the Light much more fully. The story of Luther makes a fine sermon illustration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

The spotlight is back on Jesus, where it has been all the time, as the light of the world. To the man, Jesus is one from God. To the Jews, Jesus is a terrible sinner, a multiple violator of the Sabbath. Jesus encounters the man so the man can indeed confess that Jesus is true God from the Father, equal to the Father (5:18). The man's posture and confession indicate (v 38) without any doubt what Jesus is trying to get the Jews (and you and me) to confess. No one can know Jesus just from a knowledge of sin. "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" (v 16). No one can know Jesus just through the conclusions reached about the healing. "Though I was blind, now I see" (v 25). Jesus is known through the divine revelation in Word and Sacrament. Jesus makes himself known to the man through the encounter with his word, giving the man faith (v 37). This revelation can be rejected (the Jews), and thus the judgment is upon them (v 41). Jesus' point in vv 39–41 is similar to Mt 9:12. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." The Pharisees see. They have no need of someone to correct their vision, so to speak. They see that they are all right in their own eyes and way of thinking (self-righteous). So they are blind for the need for Christ. The blind beggar has need for the physician. Though no specific sin is attributed to him or his parents (v 3), the blindness is an effect of sin in a fallen world. Jesus uses this opportunity for the spotlight to shine on himself so that those in need (the blind) are enabled to receive help (vision) and see Jesus as the light of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

9:35 JESUS HEARD...FOUND HIM – Jesus had purposely absented himself, but not really. His Word sustained the man who was under trial and thus he grew spiritually. Jesus sought him out a second time. Jesus came to this man, not vice versa. He, too, comes to us.

when he found him. Jesus obviously had been looking for the man. (CSB)

Son of Man. See note on Mk 8:31. (CSB)

Jesus, who had carefully watched the case of the former blind man, soon found out that the Jewish rulers had begun the process of excommunication against him. He therefore took occasion to look him up and reassure him in a most wonderful way. The question of Jesus, whether he believed in the Son of God, was intended to work this faith in the man's heart, for such is the nature of the Word of God at all times. (Kretzmann)

9:36 The man was ready to follow any suggestion from his benefactor. (CSB)

9:38 *I believe.* See 20:31 and note on 1:7. (CSB)

Lord ... he worshiped him. The man was giving Jesus the reverence due to God. (CSB)

The man's faith grew from acknowledging Jesus as a prophet (v. 17) to confessing Him as being "from God" (v. 33) to honoring Him as Lord. This does not mean the man realized Jesus was God. Consider the faith of the disciples, which was genuine though they lacked full understanding of who Jesus was; cf. Mt. 8:23-27.) (TLSB)

The worship follows spontaneously the recognition of his divinity. Jesus nowhere required this worship of anyone.

The healed man was a believing Israelite; his faith was placed in the coming Messiah, of whom he knew that He was the Son of God. When he was therefore assured of the identity of the Son of God with the great Healer who was speaking to him, he gladly confessed his faith and showed it by his outward act of devotion, by bending his knee in worshipful prayer; he worshiped Jesus as God. Note: Jesus never loses sight of those in whom He has taken a personal interest. The solicitude of His saving mercy ever attends those that have received His benefits. (Kretzmann)

9:39-41 The purpose of Jesus' coming was that the blind (some physically, but all spiritually) may see. Those who refuse the Light are declared blind. Jesus did not desire to blind any, just as he did not come to judge (3:17; 8:15), yet his coming causes judgment as some further blind themselves by refusing to see who he is. Jesus' response is penetrating and indicting. If they had spiritual sight, they would respond differently to Jesus. To fail to confess our blindness and receive sight from Jesus is to remain in our guilt. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

What does this miracle reveal about Jesus? He is the one sent by God, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Light of the world. Where there is darkness and blindness (sin and the "shadow of death," Mt 4:16), he brings sight and light (forgiveness, 1 Jn 1:7). His coming involves both Law and Gospel: it causes controversy and divides people in a way that points to the eternal separation between the "children of light" (Jn 12:36; Eph 5:8-13; 1 Thess 5:5) and "those who love darkness" (Jn 3:19), who will be cast into the outer darkness (Mt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

How does this event bring about belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God? Faith is a gift, the result of Jesus' miraculous healing of our natural spiritual blindness. In our text, healing and faith in Jesus result from his anointing and washing (pointing to Holy Baptism) and his speaking (pointing to the Word). He heals us from the darkness of sin, death, and the devil by bringing us into the light of forgiveness and life. Those who see confess him despite persecution, but those who oppose him are blinded further, leading to judgment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 6, Part 2)

9:39 It is unlikely that the conversation of vv. 35–38 took place in the presence of the Pharisees. The incident of vv. 39–41, therefore, probably occurred a little later. (CSB)

For judgment. In a sense Jesus did not come for judgment (3:17; 12:47), but his coming divides people, and this always brings a type of judgment. Those who reject his gift end up “blind.” (CSB)

Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to save it (3:16–17). His coming is a judgment, however, because those who reject Him bring everlasting condemnation upon themselves. (TLSB)

Jesus here makes the application, draws the moral of the events connected with the healing of the blind man. He announces that one function of His office is to carry out judgment, to put a certain separation into execution. Those that were spiritually blind and realized their pitiful condition should receive sight, while those that believed themselves endowed with spiritual and moral sight, while in reality they were hopelessly blind in spiritual matters, should become hopelessly darkened in their own conceit. Cf. Luke 2, 34. (Kretzmann)