

Grace to you and peace from God, our Creator, and from our Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

A few weeks ago, when I preached on the story of Jesus healing a man who'd been ill, I said that it revealed a lot about human nature. That we like it when things magically seem to happen – like someone being cured of something.

It's a big part of the reason why Jesus was so popular. People followed him just to watch him heal someone.

As human beings, we also like it when there's a known cause for something that happens to someone. Like in today's reading with the man who was born blind.

Right away the disciples want to know who caused it. Was it something the man did, or something his parents did?

At that time, it was common to assume that things like blindness had a cause and that the cause was somebody's fault, rather than it being something that just happened. So, to be born blind wasn't just unfortunate. It was thought to be punishment for something someone had done.

Because we understand things differently now, we recognize that the disciples' question is problematic. And in this particular translation of the Bible, so is the answer that Jesus gives.

We know that the New Testament, including the Gospels, was written in Greek. And when one language is translated into another, there are often different ways to translate it – depending on context and meaning.

One way to translate the Greek in this case is what we have in front of us, which is: "He was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him."

But a different way to translate it, and one that more closely aligns with who Jesus is and what he was about, is to say, "You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do."

If you have a copy of The Message translation of the Bible, that's its translation of Jesus' answer. And, again, it more closely aligns with who Jesus is and what he was about. Which is great!

But it's also a more difficult answer because it doesn't give a reason for why the man was born blind. He simply was. But Jesus doesn't dwell on that.

When he spit in the dirt and put the mud on the man's eyes, Jesus moved the question away from whatever any past cause there might have been – and toward future possibilities.

All through this reading, the man is referred to as the man born blind, the man who used to beg, the man who was formerly blind, the man who had received his sight, and the man who had been blind. And all of these identifiers are true. But they're all past tense.

No one referred to him as the man who now sees. Not even his parents. It's a matter of perspective and it's an important distinction. The people around the man couldn't adjust to his new reality or accept him for anything other than who he used to be. They were stuck in the past and didn't recognize him for who he'd become.

Admittedly, it was a lot to take in. In a matter of minutes, Jesus had reframed the disciples' perspective about the man and had given the man his sight. It was a difficult situation for everyone to try and make sense of.

The people brought the man to the Pharisees. The Pharisees didn't like the answers he gave, so they asked his parents. And his parents ducked the question.

The Pharisees called him back and interrogated him again. And they still didn't listen. But the man did. He heard Jesus' voice and he listened. He told the Pharisees, "You can do nothing. But this man Jesus who gave me my sight? He's from God; he can do anything."

And the Pharisees threw him out. The man had been on the outer edge of his community his whole life because of his physical blindness. And now, because he had both physical and spiritual sight, he was thrown out of the community altogether.

But he moved toward a future that exceeded anything he had previously imagined. Ultimately, he became part of Jesus' flock – one of his followers.

And we aren't told, but we can assume that through his relationship with Jesus, he continued to experience future possibilities coming into his life.

When we read these stories and consider how they shape our lives today, we discover that – with Jesus – it's never only physical healing that happens. Something shifts within the person that's healed and in the community they're part of.

Not always in the way we expect, but because of that shift – God is revealed. And where God is revealed, so are future possibilities.

We discover too, that that shift, that revelation, and the possibilities aren't limited to that moment in time. They open our hearts to who Jesus is and the way he works in our lives and in the world – moving us forward from the places we usually get stuck so that healing can happen.

<sup>1</sup>On Friday, many of us learned that the state of Kansas invalidated hundreds of drivers licenses and birth certificates of people who are transgender. They are being ordered to immediately surrender the documents they have in exchange for ones that reflect the sex assigned to them at birth.

Yesterday, many of us woke to news that the US and Israel had declared war on Iran. The politics of the situation aside, it has been confirmed that girls' school was targeted and children in it were killed.

In our worship, we pray for the healing of the world every week in various ways. And I know many of you pray for it in your own devotional practice. But praying isn't a substitute for our responsibility in the work that needs to happen.

A few days ago, someone asked me, "Well, is this service today like for the healing of the planet, or what's going on in our nation, or...?"

And I said, "Well, it's both."

Because when we talk about the healing of the world in terms of creation or healing the planet, it's about acknowledging the damage that humans have caused and the effects it's having on the weather, and soil nutrients, and air quality, and plastics in the oceans. And then repairing it.

In a sense, it's about restoring what once was so that all of life can thrive. But it's also about moving forward – doing the hard work of taking on new practices and enacting policies so that the damage doesn't happen again.

And when we talk about the healing of the world in terms of politics, systems, policies, the way people treat each other, all of that – it's about reconciliation. Doing the hard work of admitting the wrongs we have done to each other – and then doing the hard work of building relationships out of that, recognizing that because every human being

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/27/us/transgender-kansas-drivers-licenses-lawsuit.html?searchResultPosition=2>

was created in the image of God, every human being is entitled to humanity, dignity, and human rights. So that no one is ever harmed again.

And in many cases, the healing of the planet and the healing of people are wrapped up together. And one can't happen without the other.

None of this is easy. And the temptation for us is to get stuck asking whose fault it is and figuring out who's to blame. In a manner of speaking our temptation is to get stuck in the past and not move forward.

And when healing needs to happen on a large scale, like climate damage, or where genocide or armed conflict is involved, it can feel impossible to even start. But we remember that it starts with us, just a handful of people in the grand scheme of things, healing by building community with each other – in here and in our neighborhoods.

Recognizing where and how harm has been caused, and working together to repair and reconcile so that healing can happen.

It won't happen overnight. It will take time – probably longer than we want it to. But through that work of healing, Jesus heals us. And when he does, something shifts within us and the community we're part of. And when that happens, God is revealed and so are future possibilities.

They open our hearts to who Jesus is and the way he works in our lives and in the world – moving us forward from the places we usually get stuck. Toward a future of wholeness and life for everyone.

Thanks be to God! Amen.