

John Chapter 9

When a person's life is marked by some kind of deformity or hardship, it is human nature to assume someone is to blame for that person's suffering. This is no less true today than it was during the First Century, though it might have been more openly discussed then.

As Jesus and his disciples pass by a man who has been blind his entire life, Jesus is asked whose fault it is that this man suffers. Is his blindness the result of something he did wrong, or is he suffering for something his parents did? Jesus, however, says this man's blindness is not the result of sin by anyone. He makes them understand that not all suffering is a result of sin.

It's easy to read this and assume we would never make the same mistake his disciples do, but stop and think for a minute. Do you ever assume a homeless man is responsible for his situation? Do you assume he must be lazy or addicted to drugs? Jesus might tell you his homelessness was an unfortunate result of multiple circumstances beyond this man's control.

Is every alcoholic or drug addict irresponsible? Jesus might tell you some of them began that road so early in life they couldn't possibly have been responsible enough to understand the consequences of their decisions.

When you see a child that constantly misbehaves and acts out, do you assume her parents are neglecting their duties? Jesus might tell you her behavior is the result of a psychological condition that you know nothing about.

Christians make all kinds of judgments about those in the LGBTQ community. Yet, most of those making these judgments have never taken the time to get to know any of the people they judge so easily. They have no idea why anyone would choose that kind of lifestyle, so they guess. Jesus might have some very surprising things to say to us about this.

So, the question becomes, are we really any better off? Do we really think we will never find ourselves on the other side of these judgments? Anyone who thinks good Christians never have any troubles is terribly misinformed.

When another big recession comes our way, who is to say we won't be hit hard? These days, cancer and a host of other diseases seem to appear out of nowhere to devastate families every day. When this happens to someone close to you, should you have to worry about people passing judgment?

And, even if suffering is the result of a bad decision or sin against God, so what? That doesn't change anything about the fact that a person is suffering and could use some compassion.

Jesus says we shouldn't worry so much about the reasons people are suffering. Our concern should be to find ways we can help lessen that suffering.

Like he did for this blind man.

When the Pharisees find out that Jesus has healed this man, their response isn't much of a surprise. As they tend to be, they're far more concerned with the fact that it happened on the Sabbath than about anything else. They don't care how amazing Jesus' actions are and they don't care that people benefit from the miraculous works he is doing in God's name. They only care that he hasn't followed their rules.

The Pharisees use the fact that Jesus performs miracles on the Sabbath as a reason to deny his legitimacy, as if the day he chooses to perform his miracles cancels out any effect the miracles have. If helping someone isn't an appropriate thing to do on the Sabbath, then what kinds of things does God want his people to do?

Notice how strongly the Pharisees are opposed to Jesus. They're ready and willing to kick people out of the synagogue just for believing the things Jesus is doing.

Unfortunately, some churches do the same thing today in the name of protecting others. Refusing to accept a particular position in some doctrinal disagreements can be enough for a person to be pushed away.

It is not necessarily bad for the leadership of a church to desire unity on issues they feel strongly about. But, once the line is drawn, what do you do with those who don't end up on the right side? Do you tell the congregation to avoid all interactions with them? Do you shun them? Do they become an example to be talked about in the future?

Even the blind man's own parents are so scared of being kicked out of their community, that they can't even be honest about their own son.

It's a good thing for a blind man to regain his sight. Right? Just like it's good to see people freed from any kind of struggle they've been enduring for a significant amount of time.

As Christians, can we all agree that good things are of God? We should be able to agree that we can pray for God's intervention in any situation that needs it. And, we should be willing to praise God when he does intervene, regardless of his timing or his method.

Are you prepared to accept any method God uses to bring hope to the lost? At any time? And in any place? Even if it is outside of your comfort zone? Prove it.