

Sermon Series: “A Believer’s Family Album”—Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Westfield, IN—6/1/2003

Title: “The Parents of a Son Born Blind”

Text: John 9 (selected verses)

Intro.: *Ills.: Companionship of Ann Sullivan and Helen Keller*

Theme: When parenting a child with a disability, we need to place ourselves and each other under the grace and mercy of the Father so that we can continue to give grace and mercy in all and every circumstance.

**How Jesus calls us to react to the whole issue of disabilities (Print and read John 9: 1-12)**

- Be slow to make hasty judgments with regard to the disabled and the disability (vss. 1-3)
  1. A word about sin and cause and effect
    1. **Original sin**--we do inherit it from our parents (“*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Psalm 51: 5*)
    2. **Actual sin**--we are responsible for our own (“*The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.*” Ezek. 18: 20)
  2. The miracle of God’s hand in the midst of our malady of sin
    1. **Ills.: Depending on the Disabled**
- Put the “momentary trial” in an eternal context (vss. 4-5)
  3. *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2Cor4:17*
  4. Jesus put this disability and every consequence of sin in this world into a “**deliverance perspective**”
  5. Play on word “light of the world”—Jesus delivers us not just from the dark times but from darkness of sin in our life
- Reflect God’s mercy in your action and reaction (vss. 6-12)
  6. The disciples and surrounding crowd got caught up in “committee work”
    1. In our culture we spend more time analyzing the plight of the disabled than ministering to them
    2. “*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*” James 1: 22
  7. Jesus models a high touch and long on mercy approach
    1. **Ills.: Swoosh Ministry**-- “**just do it**” and let God sort it out
    2. “*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter--when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*” Isa. 58: 6-7

**Seeing God’s purpose and plan in the midst of disability (Print and read John 9: 13-17)**

- Sometimes our own prejudice and fears keep us from letting God work in, through, and around us
  8. Pharisees could only see their legalistic comfort zones and could not expect or accept God working outside of them
    1. More concerned that a Sabbath healing had occurred than that a Messianic healing had occurred
    2. They became more disabled and blind than this man had been before Jesus healed him
  9. Often we don’t know how (fear) or we don’t want to deal with (prejudice) the disability needs of others
- A word to parents of the disabled (**Print and read John 9: 18-23**)
  10. **Focus on your witness (vs. 18-21)** – it is understandable but deadly to your witness to focus on the disability
  11. **Don’t live under the bondage fear (vs.22)** – paralyzed by the enormity of challenge and the reaction of others we lose the freedom God wants you to have
    1. “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”Gal.5:1

12. **Stand with your child and by your child (vs. 23)** – no need to run because Jesus stand with you
  1. *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Philip. 4:13*
- "Give glory to God"—by letting him accomplish in you a merciful response (**Print and read John 9: 24-38**)
13. Technically the Pharisees were correct but spiritually could not bring themselves to do so (vs. 24)
14. In order to effectively ministered to the disabled, we need to humble ourselves before God
  1. **Ills.: "God's Perfection," the Story of Shaya**
15. *"In humility consider others better than yourselves . . . Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!" Phil2:3-8*

### **Companionship of Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller**

On the advice of Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, the parents of Helen Keller sent for a teacher from the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston, Massachusetts. Anne Sullivan, a 19-year-old orphan, was chosen for the task of instructing 6-year-old Helen. It was a tumultuous relationship at best during the early years as Helen Keller, who had developed almost animalistic actions and reactions fought Ann's consistent and firm efforts to teach this blind, deaf, and mute little girl to function in her world. Yet it was her love that one Helen over. Nearly 50 years of companionship ended when Anne died in 1936. Helen wrote these endearing words about her lifelong friend: *My teacher is so near to me that I scarcely think of myself apart from her. I feel that her being is inseparable from my own, and that the footsteps of my life are in hers. All the best of me belongs to her—there is not a talent or an inspiration or a joy in me that has not been awakened by her loving touch.* Seeing the potential of God's marvelous creation within Helen is what motivated and drove Ann to carry on. And it was that marvelous, transforming power of Jesus which Ann shared with Helen that brought about the glory of God in what resulted as this young woman matured into a role model for every person and parent who has struggled with coping with a disability within their child.

**Citation: Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky; source: Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (Doubleday, 1954)**

### **Depending on the Disabled**

One day [children's television's] Mister Rogers was making a trip to California and decided to pay a visit to a teenager with cerebral palsy. "At first, the boy was made very nervous by the thought that Mister Rogers was visiting him," [Tom] Junod writes. "He was so nervous, in fact, that when Mister Rogers did visit, he got mad at himself and began hating himself and hitting himself, and his mother had to take him to another room." Mister Rogers waited patiently and when the boy came back, Mister Rogers said, "I would like you to do something for me. Would you do something for me?" On his computer, the boy answered yes. "I would like you to pray for me. Will you pray for me?" Junod says that the boy was "thunderstruck" because "nobody had ever *asked* him for something like that, ever. The boy had always been prayed *for*. The boy had always been the *object* of prayer, and now he was being asked to pray for Mister Rogers, and although at first he didn't know if he could do it, he said he would, he said he'd try, and ever since then he keeps Mister Rogers in his prayers and doesn't talk about wanting to die anymore because he figures Mister Rogers is close to God, and if Mister Rogers likes him, that must mean God likes him, too." Tom Junod asked Mister Rogers how he knew what to say to make the boy feel better. He responded: "Oh, heavens no, Tom! I didn't ask him for his prayers for *him*; I asked for *me*. I asked him because I think that anyone who has gone through challenges like that must be very close to God. I asked him because I wanted his *intercession*." **Citation: Wendy Murray Zoba, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" *Christianity Today* (3-6-00), p.45**

### **"God's Perfection," the Story of Shaya**

At a fund-raising dinner the treatments of disabilities among children, the father of one such child delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended. Extolling the attendees of the dinner, he cried out, "Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything God does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is God's perfection?" The audience was shocked by the question, pained by the father's anguish, stilled by the piercing query. "I believe," the father answered, "that when God brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that he seeks is in the way people react to this child."

## John 9:1-38

<sup>1</sup>As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup>"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. <sup>4</sup>As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup>Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. <sup>7</sup>"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. <sup>8</sup>His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup>Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup>"How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded. <sup>11</sup>He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." <sup>12</sup>"Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

<sup>13</sup>They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. <sup>14</sup>Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. <sup>15</sup>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." <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>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."

<sup>18</sup>The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. <sup>19</sup>"Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" <sup>20</sup>"We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. <sup>21</sup>But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup>His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup>That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

<sup>24</sup>A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup>He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" <sup>26</sup>Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup>He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" <sup>28</sup>Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! <sup>29</sup>We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup>The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup>We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. <sup>32</sup>Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup>If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup>To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out. <sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup>"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." <sup>37</sup>Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." <sup>38</sup>Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.