

# "Keeping the Baby Baptized"

## John 9:1-7

20 February Anno Domini 2005  
The Baptism of Emmelyn Ann Webb  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho  
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the LORD our God; that is, in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Baptized,

The horrible results of the fallen angel's first conquest in this world, that is, Satan's successful temptation in the Garden of Eden are evident our world everyday. The consequences of the Fall into sin by our greatest of parents, that is, Grandpa Adam, are part of our human inheritance of disease, tragedy, war and terror. The terrible event may be of the magnitude of a roaring tsunami where nearly a quarter million are killed and the whole world hears about it. The tragic event may be in the quiet weeping of parents upon learning that their newborn has been born blind.

The questions come quickly, the answers hang in the heavens for many here and many there, and they stick in the craw for one or two here and there. The former usually boil down to, "Why?" The world queries, "Why did this tsunami happen?" A parent asks, "Why did this happen to us?" The answers, especially in this universe wherein God supposedly rules and reigns, are often either unacceptable or incomprehensible to man's reason, intellect, emotion and nature.

The faithful, however, are capable of hearing the answer and accepting it; yet, they too, . . . yet you also, need to hear the Word of God time and again and again. Therefore, please listen to John 9:1-7 and ponder . . .

. . . "Keep the Baby Baptized"

"As He (Jesus) passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of Him Who sent Me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.' As He said this, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God. Amen.

Dearly beloved, even from the get-go, these words are truly astonishing. "As Jesus passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth." Jesus, Who is truly a man as we are, yet without sin, and Who is truly God, passes by a certain area in this fallen world. In that particular earthy spot is a man who had been born blind. Jesus sees him. The Scriptures do not record any comment from our Lord as He passes by. God is passing by this poor man. God is most certainly able to help him and yet it appears

that the Lord is going to let this man remain in the dark world that was his from his birth, even from his conception in his mother's womb. Original blindness. God permits the birth of this baby, and God permits the blindness, and God, Who is in the vicinity, is passing the blind one by.

That is nothing new. It happens every day. In fact, it happens to every one conceived by man and born of woman. A baby comes into this world and it is a birth unto death. That fact is true regardless of the person - from the oldest in this sanctuary and even to this little one who is but four days old. The litany of born to die is the "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" rite of death spoken in this groaning world ever since the days of old, which began shortly after "in the beginning." Emmelyn is an infant and one day, God only knows when, it will be so for her because of original sin, which is our inheritance even from our mother's womb. God has permitted the birth of this baby, and God permits this deadly condition of spiritual blindness to exist, and God is in the vicinity. Will He pass this little one by as well?

According to the Bible, it's not until the disciples take notice and comment on the blind man and his wretched condition that Jesus utters His Word. They ask, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" It's a leading question and comes from a quite natural worldview, one that supposes that one does not suffer one thing or another without a specific sin being the primary cause. And this is based upon the fact that there's some truth in it that can be observed.

For example, abuse alcohol over a long period of time and you have liver problems. You did it; it's your own fault. A man and woman beat their daughter so severely that she is no longer able to hear. In one case a man sinned and caused his own problems; in the other, the parents sinned has resulted in a child having a problem. So, people adopt the assertion that there is no affliction of one's body or suffering of one's soul without a particular sin being the cause. So God, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind, or that she now has leukemia, or that a boy gets polio, or that a woman is depressed, or that a young man has a tumor, or that grandma has Alzheimer's Disease, or . . . well, it goes on and on, doesn't it?

Many are offended at the problem of pain and suffering, and as a result, blame God, if indeed, God is acknowledged as existing. Even Christians can, in the midst of tragedy, become angry or bewildered as they question God. So why was this baby born? Was it only to suffer and die? Did the baby sin or did his parents sin that Emmelyn was born to die?

"Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.'" This answer is not understandable apart from faith in Christ, and even then Christian wonders, "What does this mean? What are the works of God?" Apart from creation, which has already taken place, the works of God center on Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

First, ponder the works of the Incarnate Son of God. Jesus Who came to fulfill the Law in our stead. This was His work in keeping the Commandments perfectly. Jesus did this. He defeated Satan in the wilderness and this is part of His work that He has done. He also came to work out the salvation of the world by shedding His Blood on the cross in order to bestow the full forgiveness of all our sins and to cover us with His perfect robe of righteousness. This was His work in taking our sins and death upon Himself. Jesus did this as well. He also came to rise again from the dead after His sin-atoning death on the cross, in order that the darkness of disease and death and decay is defeated and replaced by the Light of Life and the glorious body manifested at His Resurrection from the grave. This triumphant work is done. Jesus is risen.

"Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.'" And how are these works of Christ manifested in a person, whether the blind man then, or the infant now here, or you?

That is the work of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God's promise. Consider the Word of Promise that the blind man had and how the Holy Spirit gave him the gift of faith to believe such Word. As He said this, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. Surely, no one would do such a thing without believing, and remember, believing is the work of God which He bestows. Faith receives the blessing that God promises, in this case that the blind man would be able to see and the Holy Spirit grants the faith necessary to receive the blessing. Indeed, thanks be to God the Father Who created water, and to God the Son Whose spittle is applied in the ministration of the Word and who directed the man to the water as the means of grace, and to the Holy Spirit Who works the intended blessing by means of water and the Word.

But how can spittle do such great things? It's not the spittle, indeed, that does it, but the Word of God which is in and with the water, and faith that trusts such Word of God. "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" For without the Word of God, the spittle is simple water only and no cure for this world's blindness; but with the Word of God, this one blind man had Christ's promise. "So he went and washed and came back seeing." The Spirit-given gift of faith, trusted such Word, and the man could then see the Light of the world.

That was for that one man at that one time. The Church has neither promise nor directive from God for dust, spittle and the pool of Siloam. Rather, we have the promise that children of God come about through baptizing households and by teaching the Word of Law and Gospel. Thus, those who sit in darkness see the Light of the world as their eyes are opened to, and in, and with Christ. In other words, that "the works of God might be manifest in" them. Please do not doubt that God works through such common means, and do not be offended that the LORD God Almighty bestows His gifts this way for people; that He is able to do such wonderful things, not only for infants, but even more miraculously, even for adults.

So the baby is sent to the pool of water in the Baptismal font. What works of God are manifest in Emmelyn? Christ died on the cross and Emmelyn has now been crucified with Christ. Of course, such a death is easy since Christ took all the pain and sting upon Himself. All Emmelyn felt was some water being poured over her head. What works of God are manifest in Emmelyn? Well, Christ rose again from the dead and now that has Emmelyn has been united with Jesus in His Death, she is united with Him in His Resurrection being born again from above and she will rise again on the Last Day. So the baby is sent to the water according to the Word of promise. So she "went and washed and came back seeing," that is, Emmelyn has been cleansed in Christ, become a member of the family of the forgiven and belongs to Jesus.

There will be other works of God manifest in Emmelyn's life. The Church - the Household of faith - is privileged to behold such works in the lives and deaths of one another. For example, the simple, gut-wrenching faith of Job who, in the midst of God allowing such awful things to happen to him, still declared concerning the LORD God Almighty, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). The persecuted, hurting Apostle Paul concludes, concerning the works of God made

manifest in us, that "we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

The Church is able to apply the Word and the Ministry of the Word and say, "We must work the works of Him Who sent Me, while it is day; before night comes, when no one can work." As long as Jesus is in this world, and He is most certainly with us, even to the end of the age, He is the Light of the world, and through the Word of God's Good News in Christ, people are able to see Jesus, our Redeemer and Savior.

It is also important and necessary for those who are Christians to continue to hear His Word and to manifest the works of God in our lives. Emmelynn was sent to the waters of regeneration wherein she was born again by the Holy Spirit, and she was washed and has returned from the living waters with the eyes of faith. That Emmelyn may continue to remain faithful and in the faith, she will need to return - next week and for as many weeks as God grants her - to return, confess her sins and hear the words, "You are forgiven of all your sins, in the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Dear Baptized, this is what it means to be ...

... "Keeping the Baby Baptized." Amen.