

what happy Mother's Day everyone with the extra burden that mothers are carrying this year I really do hope that this Mother's Day is a special blessing for you but if you're wondering my message titled today is God punishing me isn't particularly intended as a Mother's Day theme no doubt there are some mothers who are asking themselves this question maybe multiple times a day but there are probably plenty of fathers and children and grandparents as well now one of the times that I got thinking about this question was after the tsunami hit Japan the devastation was incredible and the grief of the survivors was raw and as a relief effort got started there was this flood of short-term mesh missionaries who entered the country because there was so much to do people were eager for the help at first at least but there was a certain type of missionary that caused incredible damage they arrived from different countries and they had different religious affiliations but what they shared in common was a commitment to helping the Japanese as little as possible and instead telling anyone who would give them a hearing that the earthquake and the resulting tsunami and nuclear disaster was God's judgment on them for their idolatry and unbelief I guess I shouldn't have been surprised the same thing happened in some pulpits after 9/11 and you hear similar things from some people in wake of Covid 19 in one sense this was the message that God told Jonah to give Nineveh and it was a message that many prophets brought to Jerusalem in the Old Testament but I fear that the missionaries who arrived in Japan did so with much more presumption and far less divine revelation the Japanese were left hurt angered they felt confused and betrayed felt like blaming a rape victim was cruel and thoughtless and it made real gospel ministry harder for the rest of us now most of you wouldn't do such a thing but you might pass a homeless person and assume they're getting what they deserve you might see a poor person and assume they must be lazy and when tragic circumstances hit your life you may find yourself questioning whether God might be punishing you today we're starting a short series in John's Gospel called light for your darkness the message today is God punishing me looks at Jesus' encounter with a man who was born blind and it shows when things go wrong we often look for someone to blame but God wants to open our eyes so that we can truly see if you don't already have a Bible handy I encourage you to pause the video at this point and get one I'm gonna be reading from the Gospel of John chapter 9 verses 1 to 12 John's Gospel chapter 9 verses 1 to 12 as he passed by he saw a man blind from birth and his disciples asked him rabbi who sinned this man or his parents that he was born blind Jesus answered it was not this man it was not that this man sinned or his parents but that the works of God might be displayed in him we must work the works of him who sent me while it is day night is coming when no one can work as long as I am in the world I am the light of the world having said these things he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him go wash in the pool of Siloam which means sent so he went and washed and came back seeing now the neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar we're saying this is not the man who used to sit and beg some said it is he others said no but he is like him he kept saying I'm the man so they said to him and how were your eyes opened he answered the man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me go to Siloam and wash so I went and washed and received my sight they said to him where is he he said I do not know this is the Word of God now the passage starts by looking at the wrong way to see trials when things go wrong we often look for someone to blame we assume it must be someone's fault either we're guilty someone has wronged us or else God's unfair things go wrong we look for someone to blame now the scene opens with Jesus passing by a man who's been blind from birth Jesus and the disciples are probably leaving the temple at

this point the blind man is sitting at the gate begging it was a common sight in Jerusalem in verse two the disciples posed the question who sinned this man or his parents that he was born blind they're looking for someone to blame they assume someone must be at fault if he had become blind as a teenager or an adult it probably would have been more clear to them then they would have been more certain must be his fault the fact that he was blind from birth presents more of a dilemma for them did he sin in the womb somehow or was it the parents fault people make the same assumptions today some people think everything's their fault whenever something bad happens they think I must have done something wrong they go around wracked with guilt that they can't quite put their finger on and they assume that God must be punishing them other people think everything someone else's fault they blame their problems on the government or immigrants or their parents and they're just bitter toward certain groups of people because they think those people are responsible for all that's unpleasant their lives when we're too proud to blame ourselves and not clear about how to blame other.

People will often blame God if we're not guilty and someone else isn't guilty then God must be guilty we say things like if God cares at all he wouldn't allow something like that or what kind of God allows a baby to be born blind and we don't just do that with suffering that can't be explained even when we're clearly brought the circumstances on ourselves we can still blame God like the person speeding down the road they blame the police officer for the ticket in proverbs chapter 19 verse 3 says this when a man's folly brings his way to ruin his heart rages against the Lord sometimes we just get mad when painful circumstances come we don't think we deserve it even if we've clearly caused it so we lash out and blame God but the proverb shows us that sometimes it is our own foolish that brings us down if you steal from your employer you probably get fired if you cheat on your wife you'll reap the consequences in your marriage and so it's not as if it's wrong to examine our hearts for sin and ask could I have somehow caused this problem what's wrong is when we assume that someone must be to blame it's when we demand there must be some hidden sand lurking behind every unpleasant circumstance or else life is just unfair now Jesus cuts off the disciples hunt for someone to blame he won't let them add insult to the blind man's injury by suggesting must be a result of his sin or his parents sin in verse 3 Jesus answers them it was not that this man sinned or his parents we don't like that answer very much we want someone to blame because otherwise there's no way to be sure that something like that couldn't happen to us.

and another occasion Jesus was questioned about another tragedy he responded by speaking about an incident where a tower fell and killed 14 people in Luke 13 verses 4 and 5 Jesus says those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem no I tell you but unless you repent you will all likewise perish now his choice of words is interesting in one sense he's saying they're not to blame but it doesn't quite say that instead of saying they're completely innocent he says they're no more guilty than you are that's because while there are so many painful circumstances in this life for which no one is to blame the Bible explains that in another sense we're all to blame when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden they traded paradise for a world of sickness and death and every one of us would have joined them in that choice because of human sin we now live in a world of pain and sickness and disease we experience conflict and war and death and so there's a sense in which we're all to blame so let's stop assuming that it's my fault or it's your fault or it's their fault somehow it's God's fault rather than searching for someone to blame

there's usually something else that God wants us to do so let's turn there now the second thing we learn from this passage is that when things go wrong God wants to Oh our eyes to a savior even though we've invited the pain and sickness into this world through sin there's a good God who uses the tragedy of this world for our good and he works in the storm to change us and mature us and help us to see when things go wrong God wants to open our eyes to a savior now Jesus shuts down the blame game in verse 3 and he points to God's good purposes he says it was not that this man sinned or his parents but that the works of God might be displayed in him trials aren't God's fault but they are part of his good plan the struggle we have is that we can seldom see God's plan until it's complete with the blind man we've read the rest of the story so we know that God heals him and then uses his healing to bring him to faith but our life isn't a book where we get to read ahead and get to the end and find out what happens the blind man has spent his childhood not knowing what possible good could come from his blindness his parents had seen their child born blind probably only felt disappointment that's where we find ourselves most of the time and so it's only by faith that we trust God's plan and His goodness and his love for us the problem is we've come to equate comfortable and predictable with good and uncomfortable and unpredictable with bad but the Bible doesn't know any such equations and God seems foreign to them a blind baby wasn't part of the parents plan but God used that blindness as part of his good plan there's an interesting exchange between God and Moses in Exodus chapter 4 verse 11 it says that God asks Moses a question who has made man's mouth who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind is it not I the Lord he was asking the question because Moses thought his limitations as a speaker were a liability to God God reminds him that he gave him those limitations and the implication is because all things come from the good hand of God we can trust that he'll control them for his good and accomplish his good purpose in our lives through them in the case of the man's blindness god's purpose was to use it to reveal who Jesus is in verse 5 and Jesus says as long as I am in the world I am the light of the world he's making this bold declaration of his identity and calling now if I said something like that you might pick up something to throw at me at the very least you'd probably walk out at least I hope you would these are not the words of a mere man Jesus wants the people to see that he is the one who brings light to the world's darkness and the man's blindness was a perfect metaphor to demonstrate this people are born in darkness unable to apprehend spiritual truth were blind to God but he shines his light in our darkness and gives us eyes to see in verse 7 Jesus sends the blind man away he says go wash in the pool of Siloam which means sent and when he goes and washes the verses verses say that he came back seeing now Jesus probably sends him to wash in the pool for the same reason that Elijah sent name into the Jordan River for healing if Jesus's goal was just to take away his blindness he could have just done it but he's inviting the blind man to trust him to believe that his word is reliable he's looking for a follower and I've seen that time and time again so often it's the painful trials of life that will open people's eyes to their blindness God works in the midst of tragedy to draw people to himself how many of the testimonies that you've heard of people's baptisms have begun in trials and suffering Jesus shines his light in the darkness he draws us near he reveals himself so when things go wrong instead of asking who should I blame a better question to ask is what can this teach me about God how could this help me to draw near to him how could it be used to point others to him and instead of assuming that God's punishing you look for ways that God can be calling you when things go wrong God wants to open our eyes to a Savior he also wants to open our eyes to his good plan God isn't just drawing us near to him he's often working in our hearts and equipping us to serve

when things go wrong God wants to open our eyes to his good plan we already looked at the blind man's healing briefly but I skipped over a strange part of the process before Jesus sent the blind man off to the pool to wash and be healed do you know what he did take another look at verse 6 he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva then he anointed the man's eyes with mud I assume that just about all of you have had issues with your eyes at some point in your life maybe you broke a blood vessel or had cataracts did you ever think what would really help right now is some dirt or mud in my eyes even better if only someone would spit in them that would do it right but it's almost as if Jesus wants the blind man to see that he's doubly blind he's got a double problem because on top of the blindness that he knows he eyes are all also infected by the filth and dirt of this world I think it's a picture of his spiritual blindness due to sin Jesus wants him to know that he can heal both of those because when you're blind the temptation is to think your biggest problem is you can't see when we're sick or we face an issue in our lives we often can't see anything else but that's almost never the worst thing or at least the only thing that's wrong in our lives the problem of sin is deeper it's uglier it's more dangerous and so often were blind to it we can't see it and we don't deal with it as we should and so with some spit and dirt Jesus reminds us that there's a problem underneath the problem and he has to how he has a power to heal both now I was reminded of this when I heard the testimony of a Canadian missionary couple in Japan a couple that were part of our mission often share and how their lives were focused on the world's values and blind to the world's needs they attended church but they were living for themselves and then one of their best friends died in a car accident devastating tragedy but it's God met them in that tragedy he also opened their eyes he else helped them to question what they were living for it drew them nearer to Christ and resulted in them giving their lives to missionary service when things go wrong God wants to us to open our eyes to his good plan now in this chapter in particular the problem that so many seem to share is a failure to see in verse 8 when the neighbors see the man healed they ask is this not the man who used to sit and beg remember now he's their neighbor they've probably seen him begging for years but it sounds like they don't even know his name he's just the man who used to beg then they can see then then they can't see past his blindness the disciples aren't much better I'm not sure if you noticed as I read from verses 1 & 2 it says Jesus saw a man blind but the disciples don't even see him they just see him as a topic of topic for a philosophical conversation they're blind to his needs blind to his pain probably the most tragic of all or the neighbors to see him healed of his blindness while some are asking whether it's the same person others are convinced that it is even though the healed man keeps insisting again and again he's been healed of this blindness in verse 9 some of the neighbors just can't believe it they're like no it couldn't be him but there is a definite resemblance they're blind to the power and the work of God and this is the most dangerous kind of blindness that there is now I don't know whether you find yourself trying to blame someone for kovat 19 I don't know whether you're quick to blame yourself for hard circumstance in your life and I don't know whether your tendency is to blame others for what's wrong in your world but I do know that that's where a lot of prejudice is born and that's sin blaming the blind man and his parents was cruel and insensitive and a lot of blame that we throw around when things don't go away is just as wrong this passage teaches me that trials and tragedies can become opportunities when we look to a gracious Savior who can redeem our pain it's a wonderful feeling that pain let's look for the opportunity maybe the opportunity is to draw nearer to Jesus to get to know him better learn what it means to depend on him and his strength maybe the opportunity is to see the mud and spit that's in our eyes to see Jesus for

healing and growth at a deeper level maybe the opportunity is to learn to see people around us in to nurture more compassion and engage more personally in other people's lives maybe the opportunity is to point people to Jesus to respond to his call to make him known and draw people near now as you read this passage if you wonder whether the opportunity in your life is to make you realize your spiritual blindness that you've been blind to what God has been trying to do in your life don't miss it respond to the love of God in Jesus Christ while he's given you eyes to see by putting your faith in Him he becomes light to your darkness in John chapter 8 verse 12 Jesus says I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of Life Jesus's light in Our Lives turns darkness into light he lightens the darkest of days and he gives sure hope of a bright shining morning to come make that your hope through faith in Him now in her passage today the final word went to the blind man and I want to give the final word of my message today to a blind girl she wasn't born blind but she became blind just weeks after her birth her father died before her first birthday but while physically blind her eyes were opened to a savior when she was just eight years old she wrote the following she said oh what a happy child I am although I cannot see I am resolved that in this world contented I will be how many blessings I enjoy that other people don't to weep and sigh because I'm blind I cannot and I won't she went on to write more than eight thousand hymns her name is Fanny Crosby she shows us that no matter how dark our days may feel we can cling to Jesus who gives us the light of life let's look to men prayer Heavenly Father we thank you that there is light for our darkness in Jesus Christ we thank you that there is hope we thank you that there is one that we can turn to help us father not to assume that there's always someone to blame not to get caught up fixated on who did it and why who's responsible who sinned it was instead father help us to give ourselves entrust to you to believe that you're a good god you're the one who gives us even our limitations and so we can trust that you have a good plan for them you have good purposes even in darkness nothing catches you by surprise you're still carrying out your good plan in our lives and while we don't get to read the last chapter of our lives yet and we don't get to see exactly how things will play out we can trust and believe that you are good and you care for us and so we can trust you father I pray for anyone this morning that you are seeking to reach by your word someone who you are trying to shine your light into their hearts by faith draw them to yourself open their eyes to see and give them the courage to trust you and to follow where you would lead for we ask you in Jesus name Amen now I hope that today's message has helped you to see more clearly and to look by faith for opportunities in some of the hard circumstances of life if you know someone who would be encouraged by this message and share it with them and together let's try to lift the darkness and so many people are feeling as always for more messages of hope visit www.cttamilcatholics.org you