

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 31, 2019

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Saint John's Gospel is not interested in giving us a biography of Jesus Christ or providing us with bedtime stories. The evangelist wrote his gospel for one reason: Christ is Risen and is Lord of Life, and all things exist for His glory. St John wants us to know every opportunity in life, my life, your life, the life of men 6000 years ago and 6000 years from now, exist for the glory of God.

The fact is *all things* exist for His glory. Even sin! Even every form of evil. Think of it! The fall of Adam, the Temptation of Christ in the wilderness, and the Lord's Passion and Crucifixion, and all things, minister in their own way to God's glory and are valued or devalued in relation to that glory. They cannot help but do so. The glory of God, revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, is the pivotal fact and event of creation. The Fourth Gospel is written to declare that fact.

So when he recounts the incident of the man born blind, St John isn't primarily interested in a once-upon-a-time miracle done by Jesus and too bad if you weren't there! But here it is as a nice bedtime story! You can accept it on that level if you want. St John's testimony is for a far more important reason. What happened was a sign that all men in every age are born blind and remain blind until Christ, Who is "The Light of the World" opens their eyes.

Christ says, "When so ever I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." He is the light of every age, of every generation, and of every person. After declaring this, He healed the blind man. Christ's purpose to illuminate *all* never diminishes His care for *each*. One man born blind can have the total and undivided attention of "The Light of the World."

After Christ anointed these sightless eyes He told the man to wash in the Pool of Siloam. This is not because the Lord's healing was defective! In case we miss the point, St John reminds us with an editorial comment. *Siloam* means "**Sent.**" This is one of the evangelist's famous red flags he raises throughout the Fourth Gospel. We are to sit up and take notice. In her lectures at The General Theological Seminary, Dr. Dora Chaplin had her own version of St John's red flags. She's say "Boys, take out a clean sheet of paper."

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Siloam means sent. Originally the name was given because this particular pool was man-made, and the water was artificially brought, or *sent*, to fill it. Over the years people forgot the original reason for the name of the pool. A town north of Chicago is called *Half Day*. And it sounds like a strange name for a town until you remember the original reason. This location was a half-day stagecoach ride from Chicago to Milwaukee. It was the place the stage stopped to get a fresh team of horses. But people forgot. St John wanted to remind his readers *Siloam means sent*.

The Evangelist is not interested we know some trivial detail about an ancient Jewish pool. His gospel is not the *Blue Guide* to Jerusalem! Remember, this is St John the Evangelist. He always means more than he says. The word “*sent*” was the very word Christ and His Church used to describe the apostles. The Father sent the Son and the Son sent the apostles. And the apostolic mission embodied in the Catholic Church is the source from which “The Light of the World” can be formed in the darkness of sin-sick humanity. That is what St John wants his readers to know. He reminds us the remedy for our blind souls is to bathe in Christ sent from God. We are to bathe in His Precious Blood, by penitence and Eucharist, and bathe in His truth, by receiving the Word of the Living Lord in the teaching of His Church.

Those who accept the remedy of Word and Sacrament come to behold Our Blessed Lord Jesus and the world around us with a clearness by comparison to which everything since our birth has seemed as blindness. That was true after the blind man washed in the pool of Siloam and followed the instructions of Jesus. And St John wants us to know it is true today.