

After Vision Shifts

John 9:1–41

My Amazing Story

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Additional Bible Readings

1 Samuel 16:1–13

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5:8–14

God, help us to see the ways you turn the ordinary elements of life into something amazing. Shift our perspective to place you at the centre so we may be transformed as we look at the world differently. Amen.

God's restorative love is expressed in Jesus' life and ministry. Blindness and other ailments were often viewed as punishment for sin in ancient times. The disciples of Jesus and the leaders who oppose him assume this. Biblical scholar Richard Rohrbaugh speaks of an ancient custom of spitting in the presence of the blind to protect oneself from the "evil eye." Jesus transforms that act of disdain into one of healing.

Sabbath-keeping was the most visible mark of practicing Judaism. Its weekly ritual of renewal reflected – even as it worshipped – the God who "rested" (translating the Hebrew shabbath) on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:2). In this story, Jesus' healing on the Sabbath creates the initial controversy (verse 16). At issue is what can or cannot be done on the Sabbath, and many oral traditions developed to provide guidance. "Kneading" was technically forbidden. Jesus' making of mud (verse 6) could be viewed as such an activity. The larger question involves Sabbath and healing. Has Jesus broken or kept the law by performing this act?

The healing creates division within the community. Neighbours divide over whether this is the same man they had known (verse 9). Pharisees divide over whether Jesus is from God or not (verse 16). The man's parents distance themselves from their son for fear of the religious leaders (verses 21–22). These divisions within the narrative hint at divisions between church and synagogue in the author's time. The threat of expulsion from the synagogue can be heard as reflecting that later state of affairs.

The transformation of the healed one is not just from blindness to sight. Initially, the blind man is a passive recipient of Jesus' actions, but

he becomes more active as the story goes on. By reporting what has happened, he becomes a teacher of theology to the teachers of theology. Eventually, this healed one becomes a disciple of the one who healed.