

John 9:1-7, 13-17, 34-39

If someone at a formal dinner party were to raise their glass of wine to you and say as a toast, "Here's mud in your eye," it would actually be a good thing. It sounds a little strange, but it is a toast of congratulations. Some believe that the phrase, "Here's mud in your eye," goes back many centuries to the time of our text for today when Jesus put mud in the eyes of the man who was born blind. Putting mud in the eyes is not the accepted practice at medical centers. Doctors do not anoint the eyes of their blind patients with mud and then wash out their eyes with water. It is, however, the practice of the church. What Jesus did for the blind man is not what He wants hospital physicians to do. But it is what He demands His pastors are to do.

When Jesus put mud in the eyes of the blind man, we're not told that the man said anything. But he certainly may not have cared much for the process. It would not have felt very good. It was probably irritating, also humiliating. But what could he do? He, being blind, was helpless, and Jesus was acting with authority.

But Jesus did not leave him in his helplessness. He gave him the command to go and wash in the pool at Siloam. And after washing, he came back seeing. The putting of mud in his eyes was not what gave him his sight. But it was a necessary step. The mud came first, and then the washing at Siloam allowed him to see.

Were someone to raise their glass and toast you with the words, "Here's mud in your eye," you would likely raise your glass in response. But were they to actually follow through...take a handful of mud and smash it into your eyes, you would hardly feel like toasting. You would have the urge to fight them off. You would even get a little angry. And this is exactly how we react in the church. When your pastor preaches the Law, God is putting mud in your eyes, and we don't much care for it. It's irritating, humiliating. We want to fight back. We get upset at both God and His messenger--His mudslinger. For one thing, we don't think we need the mud. We can see just fine. We're not pagan unbelievers. We're not the derelicts of society who stand condemned because they have no use for God. "Why preach the Law to me! Get your mud out of my eyes!"

The Pharisees had no use for mud in their eyes. They believed they could see just fine. Had Jesus attempted to put mud in their eyes, they would have reacted violently. In fact, they did. Whenever Jesus taught, they seethed with anger in their hearts. They fought back when He accused them. They dragged Him to a cross and crucified Him.

The tragedy, for them, was not that they had no use for the mud. It was that they had no use for the pool at Siloam. The blind man went to the waters of Siloam because he had mud in his eyes. But why would anyone go and wash in those waters unless they needed to? Certainly not the Pharisees. They fought off the mud whenever Jesus preached to them. They refused to allow the mud to stick. They did not see their sins. They did not admit their guilt. And so they never did get to the waters of Siloam. There was no mud to send them there. And they remained, therefore, in their blindness, believing themselves to be good enough...good enough for God, good enough for heaven.

You and I need mud in our eyes. We need God to put it there by the preaching of His Law, because even as Christians, our sinful flesh wants no part of God. If you and I were holy in every way, completely without sin, we could dispense with the mud because we would have no need for the waters of Siloam, no need for Jesus' mercy and forgiveness. But that would make us Pharisees...people unwilling to see our own faults, people unwilling to see our wretched sinful

condition. Whenever you come to God's House, His mudslinger will throw it in your eyes. God's Law does accuse. It does condemn. It hurts to hear it, to apply it to ourselves by letting the mud stick. You and I need to admit that we are worthless sinners. Our hearts are diseased with sin. We are blind to our own faults, although we clearly see the faults of others. We need the mud. We need God to put in our eyes so that we see our need for the waters of Siloam.

Dear friend, welcome to Siloam. Our pews are not packed. Just like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, most today see no need for these waters. But you are here as sinners whom God has dealt with by covering your eyes with mud so that you cannot see the sins of others, but rather are forced to look inside and see your own guilty heart. God has led you by the hand here to the waters of Siloam. Here Jesus washes off the mud and you see His mercy. Here the accusations of the Law are removed. Here your sins are forgiven. God put the mud in your eyes for no other purpose than to lead you to these waters...the waters into which you are baptized, the waters of His words of mercy, the waters of His Holy Sacrament on the altar for you.

If you could remove the mud from your eyes by yourself, you would have no need for the waters at Siloam. But you cannot. No one can. God has shut up all sinners under His Law. No one can keep it. No one can be saved with just the mud. No one is good enough for heaven. As Jesus sent the blind man to Siloam, so the Holy Spirit brings you here to those very waters because there is salvation nowhere else. As Jesus' word and promise went with the blind man to Siloam and opened his eyes, so Jesus, with His words and promises, is here for you.

In the waters of Siloam we see Jesus standing, hanging from the cross for you. And His eyes are covered. They are covered with His own blood, for the thorns press deeply into His head. That's why the waters of Siloam are cleansing waters. They are filled with the blood of your Savior, and your sins are forgiven, washed clean in the blood of Christ. Jesus' eyes close and death covers them. He dies for you. He who is good enough for heaven chooses to endure hell in your place. And so, friend, God gives heaven to you. Not because you are good enough, but because of Jesus. He gives you eternal life in and through the waters of Siloam.

There are so many people who live each and every day with mud covering their eyes. But they never get to Siloam. Children who hear the harsh law from their parents, but never hear the Gospel. Sinners who are taught the law from the pulpit, but are then told to wipe off the mud from their eyes themselves. They are not given the pure and sweet forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ in the waters of Siloam. God does not want your eyes, or the eyes of anyone, to remain covered with the mud of His accusing Law. He wants every sinner to come to these precious waters of Siloam where mercy, and love, and forgiveness, and eternal life are given in full measure; where your mud, along with your guilt, and your burdens, and your sorrows, and your sins are washed away; where you see heaven open to you in Jesus. These waters of Siloam are for you. They are for your loved one who is struggling with their sin. They are for your dear friend who is burdened with guilt. Anyone who has mud in their eyes is welcome here at the waters of Siloam. Amen.