

*Introduction:*

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In one of Tom Wilson's ZIGGY cartoons he shows us the reality of the typical behavior of man. We tend to be friendly with people until we have some kind of advantage over them. In this cartoon, Ziggy has gone to the Friendly Loan Company to get a loan. He is informed that they can be friendly or they can give him a loan but not both. Sometimes religion exposes itself in this way. This is apparent in Jesus day. Everywhere Jesus went to do good the religious leaders were there to harass Him because He didn't do things their way. A good example of this is found in the account of Jesus' healing of the man born blind.

*Body:*

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***The Man Born Blind***

**John 9:1-7 (NIV)**

[1] As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. [2] His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

[3] "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. [4] As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. [5] While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

[6] Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. [7] "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Because of the guilt, shame, and embarrassment of past sins, the circumstances of life are often blamed on those sins. Many people feel like God is punishing them for the sins of the past. Now sometimes there are consequences for sin but every difficulty in life is not some kind of punishment for sin. Usually things happen just because they happen, and sometimes God uses the circumstances of our lives to show the glory of God. Jesus declares Himself to be the light of the world and to the honor and glory of God He heals the man born blind.

**John 9:8-12 (NIV)**

[8] His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" [9] Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

[10] "How then were your eyes opened?" they demanded.

[11] He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He

told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

[12] "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

Notice how the world deals with the works of God. Some believe and some do not. Some try to explain away. Even in the face of irrefutable evidence further proof is demanded. Do not be surprised that the world has a problem with the overwhelming evidence of the works of God. For example intelligent design is an overwhelming testimony to the work of God's creation, but the world rejects that evidence. The fact is, like the people in Jesus day, they do not want to believe in a God that they must answer to. They don't want to think about a God who will change their world.

#### John 9:13-23 (NIV)

[13] They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. [14] Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath.

[15] Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

[16] Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.

[17] Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet."

[18] The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. [19] "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

[20] "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. [21] But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." [22] His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.

[23] That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

They gather support for their disbelief. Again, irrefutable evidence is presented and still they refuse to believe. Finding a religious law that they can use for their own advantage they accuse the healer of sin to discredit His work and explain away the real works of God. You see God isn't about the law and its demanded performance. God is all about love and the relationships that man can have with Him and the relationships that men can have with each other. This disbelief is so prevalent that even the parents of the man born blind, who should be rejoicing at the healing of their son, are afraid to get involved for fear they will be thrown out of the synagogue.

#### John 9:24-34 (NIV)

[24] A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to

God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." (Can you believe the trouble this man is having to go through just because he was healed?)

[25] He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

[26] Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

[27] He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

[28] Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! [29] We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

[30] The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. [31] We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. [32] Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. [33] If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

[34] To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

The man born blind again presents irrefutable evidence to the work of God in his life but the religious community refuses to believe him. They did not want to hear the truth. They wanted the man to tell them what they wanted to hear, they wanted their ears tickled. Acts 7:56-58 (NIV) [56] "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." [57] At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, [58] dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Those reacting to the healing of the man born blind, in keeping with their law, instead of the loving relationship they should have in the community of God, they throw the man born blind out of their church community.

#### John 9:35-38 (NIV)

[35] Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

[36] "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

[37] Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

[38] Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

Having been thrown out of the religious community that the man born blind had known all of his life he is introduced to a new community, the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Jesus introduces himself to the man born blind.

This account has many important truths in it but the purpose is to show that a relationship with God goes beyond religion. This account is recorded just before, and leads into the teaching Jesus gives about the Good Shepherd.

### ***The Good Shepherd***

Now Jesus talks about the Good Shepherd because He wants the people to know that in following Him they have a shepherd for a religious leader. But how, and why, should they follow Jesus as opposed to other religious leaders? The setting is the healing of the man born blind and the reaction of the religious community to that miracle. Now that the man born blind has been thrown out of the religious community that he has known all of his life, what is he to do now? I think this is a question all of us face in our lives. When our world falls apart in some way or another, what are we to do? When the religious community we are part of, or individuals in the community, disappoint us what are we to do? Jesus gives us the answer in His teaching about the Good Shepherd. As we read this keep in mind that Jesus is telling the man born blind what he is to do now that he has been thrown out of his religious community.

#### **John 10:1-39 (NIV)**

[1] "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. [2] The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. [3] The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. [4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. [5] But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." [6] Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

Remember, in this crowd, probably right up in front, is the man that was born blind, but now he can see. And Jesus is telling him what he needs to know and what he needs to do.

[7] Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. [8] All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. [9] I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. [10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

[11] "I am the good shepherd. **The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.** [12] The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. [13] The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Remember, the man that was born blind but now can see is listening to every word Jesus says. To hear Jesus say that He will lay down His life for the man born blind is a stark contrast to the treatment he received from the other religious leaders he

had encountered in his lifetime.

[14] "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— [15] just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. [16] I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. [17] The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. [18] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

[19] At these words the Jews were again divided. [20] Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?"

[21] But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

As he watches the reaction of the crowd and the religious leaders who are there in the crowd listening to Jesus, the man born blind sees the same reactions to Jesus teachings as he received when he gave them the testimony of his healing. But Jesus has said a very important thing that would resonate in the life of the man born blind. Jesus said He would lay down His life for His sheep. In fact the man born blind knew very well that Jesus could have been stoned for the actions He took that day in healing him on the Sabbath. Jesus not only talked about what He would do, He acted. He healed the man born blind in spite of the danger He faced from the religious leaders of the day.

[22] Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, [23] and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. [24] The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

[25] Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, [26] but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. [27] My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. [28] I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. [29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. [30] I and the Father are one."

[31] Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, [32] but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

[33] "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

[34] Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? [35] If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken— [36] what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I

said, 'I am God's Son'? [37] Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. [38] But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." [39] Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

There are two questions that we must answer in our lifetime. First, in my life who really loves me? Second, in my lifetime how can I show them that I love them?

Jesus laid down His life for me.

Will I lay down my life for Him?

### *Conclusion*

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Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than he lay down his life for his friends." This does not necessarily speak of dying but laying down the life we live every day for the best interests of our friends especially Jesus who declares here that we are His friends.

John 15:9-15 (NIV)

[9] "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. [10] If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. [11] I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. [12] My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. [14] You are my friends if you do what I command. [15] I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

The expectation that we should lay down our lives for our brothers is rarely seen as our physical death. Rather it is seen in the way we lay down our lives on a daily basis to meet the needs of those around us.

1 John 3:11 (NIV)

[11] This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

1 John 3:14-18 (NIV)

[14] We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. [15] Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

[16] This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. [17] If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? [18] Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

Earlier I said, There are two questions that we must answer in our lifetime. First, in my life who really loves me? Second, in my lifetime how can I show them that I love them?

Jesus laid down His life for me.

Will I lay down my life for Him?

Close in prayer.