

# Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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**Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:**

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):  
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

**John 9:1-41**

Year A - Lent 4, Text: John 9:1-41  
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## One of the Seven Signs

In his Gospel narrative, the evangelist John speaks of Jesus performing seven signs:

- In John 2:1–11: During the wedding at Cana, Jesus turns water into wine.
- In John 4:46–54: Jesus heals a (Gentile) royal official's son "from afar off."
- In John, Ch. 5: Jesus heals a crippled man at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem.
- In John, Ch. 6: There are two signs: Jesus multiplies the loaves, and Jesus walks on the water.
- In John, Ch. 9: Jesus heals a blind man.
- In John, Ch. 11: Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

Just as there are seven signs in the Gospel of John, there are seven scenes in the healing narrative in John 9 described below.

**Verses 9:1–7:** These verses describe Jesus healing a man "blind from birth" on the Sabbath. He rubs a mixture of mud and saliva on the man's eyes and then tells him to wash his face in the pool of Siloam.

Note: Prior to the Gospel accounts of Jesus' restoring sight to the blind (e.g., today's text, and Mark 8:22–26, 10:46–52 and parallels), the only other biblical/apocryphal reference to the curing of a blind person is recorded in the book of Tobit (see 7:7; 11:7–13; 14:1–2). However, Tobit was not *born* blind.

When Jesus and the disciples first see the man, the disciples suggest that his blindness is a result of either his own sin or that of his parents. Jesus rejects both ideas and says the condition exists so that God might be glorified — and then heals the man. In using spittle, kneading clay, and healing on a Sabbath, Jesus breaks rules defined in Jewish traditions. What follows in John 9:8–41 is a discourse on judgment.

**Verses 9:8–12:** The man returns to his community and is questioned about what has taken place. He tells his

neighbors that "the man called Jesus" healed him (v. 11).

**Verses 9:13–17:** Next, the man is questioned by the Pharisees who insist that Jesus must be a sinner, for if He heals on the Sabbath He is not from God. However, the man responds by referring to Jesus as a prophet (v. 17).

**Verses 9:18–23:** The Pharisees then question the man's parents. Because the parents fear that they will be excommunicated from the synagogue if they get involved in a debate with the Pharisees, they tell them to talk to their son.

**Verses 9:24–34:** A lengthy debate takes place between the man and the Pharisees. When the man (sarcastically) asks the Pharisees if they too want to believe in Jesus, they explode in anger and excommunicate the man (v. 34). Excommunication from the synagogue of Jews who confessed Jesus as Messiah seems to have begun ca. AD 85, when the curse against the minim or heretics was introduced into the Jewish prayer titled Eighteen Benedictions.

**Verses 9:35–39:** Jesus then meets with the man and refers to Himself as the Son of Man. The man then addresses Jesus as Lord and worships Him (v. 38). His eyes have been opened.

**Verses 9:40, 41:** The Pharisees then approach Jesus and ask Him if He sees them to be blind. Jesus responds that because they refuse to see Jesus for what He truly is, their "sin remains." They are spiritually blind!

Jesus' actions declare Him to be the Light of the world. He is also the Judge of those who encounter His light. The Pharisees' problem is that they call evil good, and good evil. Their concern is observing rituals, not serving human need. They slander and condemn both Jesus and the one whom Jesus heals. However, the ones who are judged and found wanting

are the Pharisees themselves. Judgment is exercised on the Pharisees, not by the Pharisees. Those who think they can see are declared to be blind.

It is important to note the titles used by the man Jesus healed of his physical blindness as his spiritual sight grows; note v. 11, 17, 38. The irony is that one who is blind is empowered to see (the truth about Jesus' Person and ministry), while those who believe that they can see are in reality blind (to God's truth and Jesus' identity). The Pharisees were not willing to accept the testimony of others.

The narrative contrasts light (Jesus) with blindness (Jewish leaders). Although the latter judge Jesus, they themselves are judged by the Light of the World. The question for us today is: Can we truly see the "real Jesus" (our forgiving Savior and Servant Lord) who calls us not merely to believe but also to follow? (Note Luke 18:35–43, in particular v. 43.)