

Trust the Mud

East Ontario, Holy Trinity and St. Mary's

March 15th, 2026

(John 9: 1-41)

Holy God, give us eyes to see and ears to hear, and faith the hold fast to what you reveal. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

One of the things we humans have always groped in the dark of suffering for, is some kind of explanation for our ailments and tragedies. “Did I sin?” “Do I lack faith?” I’ve said this before and I’ll say it again, for our questions about suffering and evil, God tends not to give us explanations or answers, but a person. And the solution to our pain isn’t necessarily an answer but, looks like us becoming these little people with that big Person in our lives.

Just look at this case of Jesus with the man born blind. Disciples look at the man born blind. Born blind: not fair. Unless, hey, maybe he sinned—what, in a past life?—maybe his parents sinned: in which case we don’t have to deal with the confusion of why God would do or allow something unfair, and, if fair’s fair, we don’t have to feel bad for the poor man born blind. Jesus then does what he so often does: he answers by showing we’re asking the wrong question, but then leaves us with an answer that requires more faith than we wanted to have. “It was

not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

That the works of God might be displayed in him. Now in the story comes one of Jesus’ great “signs.” He will heal the man born blind. More than that he will give him eyes to see, believe, and even worship Jesus as Messiah and Saviour, in a way that many born with vision can’t see. This is more than a miracle. It’s a sign; it’s a revelation; it’s a message in actions speaking louder than words. One of our Anglican greats, Archbishop William Temple wrote this in 1939, “The man *born blind from birth* is every man. For it is a part of that *sin of the world* which *the Lamb of God beareth away* that by nature we are blind, until our eyes are opened by Christ the *Light of the world*” (*Reading in St. John’s Gospel*, 1955, 154).

Jesus’ sign then unfolds. Saliva he spits into the dust. Saliva was used in ancient medicine as a healing agent. But we can see, in hindsight, with the eyes of faith, and the memory of the scriptures, Jesus’ hand making mud to flicker with the figurative hand of the Creator in Genesis 1, moulding from clay the human, the earth-creature. The invisible hand of the Creator is there in Jesus as a visible human hand, doing his Creator-work, his earth-craft. Jesus applies mud to the eyes of the man born blind. Then the man is sent on a very long walk to find a place to wash his face. And he comes back with sight. And when he returns, among all the

people around Jesus also with sight, a back-and-forth unfolds between Jesus and the Gate-keepers of God's truth about vision and blindness about God.

We who ask with the disciples, "why God, why? What have I done to deserve this? What did they do to deserve that?" are confronted with a man, God the Creator become the only true human in this picture, and he says, "it's so the works of God might be displayed." And we must know that for Jesus in this scene, the healing he is really interested in for the man born blind, isn't the physical eye-sight; it's the sight the Pharisees don't have, and which Jesus gives also to the man born blind; faith to see God displayed and known in Jesus. Not an answer about fairness; a person who makes fairness besides-the-point; and the faith to receive him, and our life-in-him, as enough.

So, first, for us: an attitude change. Don't assume you are even *able* to see the truth of God, the world, and yourself, with your own understanding. Sometimes we can't see how things really are until we've had some deep and challenging healing. For a light example, think about how when it's late in the day, we're tired, and we can't for the life of us sort out some problem we are trying to solve. It's not that the problem is unsolvable; it's that we need to go to bed, wake up the next day, and with a rejuvenated, strengthened mind, the problem either goes away or we suddenly have the mind to sort it out. The problem didn't change; you changed. For a heavier example—I've heard parishioners and my spiritual director talk

about their experience of divorce; about choosing to get a divorce—without serious abuse or betrayal going on—and then realizing in their second marriage that unless we suffer through a deep personal change, the sources of divorce are in ourselves—unhealed trauma, unhealed vice and wrong expectations. So, the attitude change: we need deep healing before we, born spiritually blind, are able to see things how they really are.

Second, trust the mud. Trust the mud. Trust the mud figuratively and literally.

Figuratively, you've been put through S.H.I.T in life. It's mud in your face, and let's be real; it feels like God put that mud in your face. Why? Don't look for a reason why; it's not fair; look for a work of God to be displayed through it. How has God formed you, or how might God form you, like Adam from clay, through your struggles? Look to God to complete God's earth-craft of forming you through the mud God puts on your face. And then find a way through prayer and devotion to wash that mud off.

Okay: now, literal mud. In whatever ways we are physically able, we need to get our hands dirty, our faces weathered, come home smelling like outside. God forms us and heals us from earth. It's good and right to get mucky, sweaty, cold. Get actual mud on our faces and hands, gardening, clearing brush, laying on the

beach, fishing, hunting, building or crafting something, sitting outside, walking through snow. We are not above these things. We're made from these things, in the hidden hand of our Creator.

Lastly, mystical mud: Jesus' body. Jesus' blood. His body unified to his divinity, is a fully healed humanity, a new Adam. What his divine-human body now touches, he heals. Believe in him. Hope in him. Love him. Eat. Drink. Taste—and *see* that he is God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.