To display the works of God

John 9:1-12

When we live on this earth we confront many hardships. Especially, there are irresistible difficulties which we cannot handle by our own power and ability. For example, a person named Nick experienced such tragedy like this. He was born without limbs and legs from birth. When we look at this man, we cannot help but ask these questions. Who made this man like this? Does this man have the meaning and purpose of his life? I will let you know how this man’s story end later. There are many cases of tragedy and affliction in our lives which we cannot control like this child even though we have no special mistakes; when we have an incurable illness, or when your child suddenly becomes ill, or suddenly you lost a job….etc(엑세더라). Today Jesus wants to teach us how to overcome these irresistible misfortune and unbearable sadness. We pray earnestly that we may overcome our sufferings through the great gift of Jesus today and live a glorious and victorious life.

1. Who sinned?

Let’s look at verse 1. “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.”

Jesus was walking with his disciples in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the city where many successful and powerful people gathered and met together to make connections. However, Jesus focused on a worthless beggar who lived in a very low and poor condition, and he watched him.

I used to see one beggar on the street when I drove. He stood by the road with a sign saying his condition. I avoided the eye contact with him, and intended to look at other things in order not to give him money. And I changed the signal quickly so that I could pass him as soon as possible. However, Jesus paid attention to his condition. Jesus does not ignore our circumstances of desperation and humility, but wants to help us truly. What did the disciples do comparing to Jesus, who wanted to help him?

The disciples asked Jesus whose fault made this man blind. Why did they ask Jesus this question when they saw this blind? I think the disciples wanted to solve the questions they were wondering about. Why tragic and unintended misfortunes cause people to suffer and suffer? The disciples believed that the cause of misfortune was sin. And they wanted to know who was responsible for the terrible tragedy so that they could shift responsibility to others and escape from uncomfortable feeling. They thought that the cause of misfortune was based on the Scripture in the Old Testament. However, let’s think about their question in more detail. If this born-blind beggar was guilty of his sin in his mother's womb, how unfair and fateful this blind man was! He sinned and became blind before he knew what sin was? If he was born with this blindness because of his sin, he would have no choice but to curse himself. And he would blame God who cursed him unfairly even before his birth.

What if it was not his own sin, but his parents' sins? Regardless of his own will, he has been unable to meet his parents so well once that his life has fallen into hell. And if he had to live in that condition, he could blame his parents for his whole lifetime. So, whatever the answer might be, this question made this man more painful and fatalistic. What made the blind beggar sadder was that he could not do anything but beg to survive. What made people saddest is that they feel that they cannot do anything meaningful and worthy which makes them have the sense of existence, preciousness, and worthiness. People need to work. Without work, the meaning and purpose of life are lost. But it is meaningless if we work only for our own bodies and materials, which are going to rot and disappear in the world. We are made for the work of God, not for things to perish. Then what is the work of God? 1 Peter 2:9 says,

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

And Matthew 5:13-16 says,

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:13-16)

Becoming chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nations who bring many people to the light from darkness is the work of God. And by becoming salt and light of the world so that others may see our good works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven is also the work of God.

When we do God's work, our life has meaning and purpose. However Jesus’ disciples and we think that misfortune is stopping God’s work and making his work impossible. But Jesus did not think so. The way Jesus approaches misfortune is completely different from ours. Let’s look at verse 2. Jesus speaks. “This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

Jesus said that the work of God would manifest through this man. He said that the manifestation of God's work through this man is really the purpose of the birth of this blind man. In Jesus, even miserable and irresistible misfortunes can be used for the work of God, for the glory of God. What made this blind beggar more difficult? The fatalistic attitude to his life that he can do nothing by misery made him more difficult. I showed you a picture of a young child who was born without a limb and a leg named “Nick” at the beginning. What happened to this man in the end?Nick becomes an evangelist who has shared his message of hope to over 6 million people in 57 countries. He shared how his faith, which is rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ, changed his life forever! He is the Founder, President and CEO of Life Without Limbs, a non-profit organization whose mission is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ through his own life. Since his first speaking engagement at age 19, Nick has traveled around the world, sharing his story with millions, sometimes in stadiums filled to capacity, speaking to a range of diverse groups such as students, teachers, young people, business professionals and church congregations of all sizes. Today this dynamic young evangelist has accomplished more than most people achieve in a lifetime. He’s an author, musician, and actor. Nick says, “If God can use a man without arms and legs to be His hands and feet, then He will certainly use any willing heart!”

How much better you are than Nick if Jesus uses you to expand his kingdom? Jesus can use you more than him. When we look at health problems, children's problems, academic problems, economic problems, relationship problems, and raising disciples problems, we may think that we cannot do anything because of many problems. But according to Jesus all these problems can be used to display God's work. “This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in him.” From Jesus’ viewpoint to see human tragedy, what is our real problem? The problem is not fate itself, but our fatalistic attitude toward our difficult circumstances. Our fatalistic attitude causes us to lose even our willingness for what we can do. However, there is no the word ‘fate’ and fatalistic attitude in Jesus. Even if Jesus used this born blind man and Nick who has no limbs and legs without any fatalistic viewpoint, how much more can Jesus use us? Jesus considered us more precious than himself that he sacrificed his life on the cross. Even though Jesus had to take more irresistible sorrow on the cross for sinners like us, he didn’t complain or reject it, but accepted it. This was because his love and hope for us are never diminished or abandoned because of our tragedy or our problems. We can do many things in Jesus even in tragedy because Jesus bears us and loves us until he gave his life for us. May God forgive all our fatalistic thinking when we look at our tragedy and help us not to give up to do God’s work. Because Jesus’ love never fails, Jesus uses our tragedy to show God’s work. May God bless us to overcome all fatalistic idea toward our tragedy which hides God’s glory, and may God help us to challenge them to do God’s work. Suppose this man wasn’t born blind, but died without knowing Jesus, this might have been more miserable misfortune to this man because he had to live in eternal darkness of death. So even though his blindness was sorrowful destiny for him, the blindness didn’t make his life sadder, but it helped him to receive the true light of the world by meeting Jesus, who is a wonderful gift of salvation and to be used as a tool to testify Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus teaches us that this man was not born to be miserable, but to display God's glory. There is no accident in God. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” We find God’s purpose in all human situations. We must accept this truth and overcome our human situations and give glory to God. When one does not live for the glory of God, he cannot but live selfish life. The results are drug abuse, alcoholism, and all kinds of evildoings. Therefore, in whatever situation we may be in, with what kind condition we were born, we must live for the glory of God. That’s the purpose of life given to man. God made man to live for the glory of God, not for the glory of perishing world.

1. I am the light of the world.

Then how did Jesus reveal the work of God through this born blind man? The Old Testament prophesied that when the Messiah comes, he will heal the blind man. Isaiah 35:5-6 says,

"Then will the eyes of the blind be openedand the ears of the deaf unstopped.Then will the lame leap like a deer,and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.”(Isaiah 35:5-6)

As Jesus healed this born blind man, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the Old Testament. This blind beggar was used to reveal the Messianic work of healing the blind. Like Nick and this blind beggar, disgrace and tragedy changed their lives into a marvelous life to reveal Jesus.

Look at verses 4 and 5. "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." In this allegorical expression, "day" refers to "lifetime." "Night refers to "after death." Jesus is telling us that God gives man his lifetime to display God's glory, not to grieve over his miserable human condition or destiny. The night of darkness is coming when no one can work. How tragic it is for a man to discover himself too late that he wasted his time! He might have done something with it to glorify God. The most dreadful thing in the world is that we cannot work any longer. But it is a cold reality that a time is coming when we cannot work any longer. Whether we like it or not, death is coming surely and slowly to all men. We have a limited time to do the work of God. We have to maximize our lifespan to do the work of God. We do not know when night will come for us. The night comes, it will come certainly, may come suddenly, is coming nearer and nearer. Now is the best time to do the work of God. Did you find the work of God in your life today?

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” When any one accepts Jesus in his heart, Jesus drives out all the dark and dead things in him, he and fills him with the Holy Spirit. The blind man was in utter darkness. But when he accepted Jesus into his heart, he could see the light. Those who have accepted Jesus have the light of life. Where there is no Jesus, there is only the darkness of sin and death. Where there is the light of Jesus in one’s heart, there is peace and joy, and the glory of God shines upon him. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

1. "GO...WASH IN THE POOL OF SILOAM” (6-12)

Jesus taught his disciples how to overcome the fatalistic way of thinking in their hearts. Here, Jesus taught them how to put what they knew into practice. Jesus wanted to teach his disciples how to overcome the fatalistic elements of life practically. Look at verse 6. "Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.” When he had no water, he used his saliva as water. When he had no medical instrument, he used mud on the ground as medicine. He spit on the ground, made some mud, and put it in the man’s eyes. In this way Jesus found the way to heal the man. When we see Jesus’ way of healing the man born blind, it looks very funny. Jesus might have been accused of medical malpractice. But this is the expression of divine love; it is the expression of God’s shepherd heart for mankind. No one can overcome his or her fatalistic element of life by just sitting and begging for others' sympathy. But most importantly, we learn Jesus' shepherd heart. When Jesus, the Good Shepherd, saw this man, he determined to help him out, and he did it.

How did the blind man respond? The blind man obeyed. He was not upset because he trusted Jesus. He could have washed his muddy eyes in the first fountain he found but he went to all the way to the pool of Siloam. He endured Jesus’ obedience training very well. He was not emotional but was very patient. What happened to him? Look at verse 7b. He came home seeing. What a great miracle it was! This man experienced God's healing when he obeyed Jesus' method though he could not understand why. What a surprise! Here we learn that God can work together with those who obey him.

By the great mercy of Jesus, the blind man could see the beautiful world. He did not need eye surgery because Jesus gave him 20/20 vision. What did the people in his community think of him when he could see? When his neighbors saw him, they said, "Isn't this the same man that used to sit and beg?" (8) Others said, "No, he only looks like him." (9a) This man's changed life brought identity issue among the neighbors. When we are changed by the grace of God, our old buddies began to look at us strange like the neighbors of the blind man. We have new identity as God's children. At that time we must testify clearly, "I am the man." In verse 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."

Based on today’s passage, I realized that I had fatalistic thinking of way toward my difficulties. I gave up my effort and prayer to do God’s work because I didn’t have enough money and I had many family problems. However, I found that God can use even my difficult circumstances to do God’s work since God’s love and work never fail even in my difficult situation.

Today Jesus taught us how to overcome our difficulties. Fatalistic attitude toward our tragedy is more serious problem than the tragedy itself. There is no fate in Jesus. Even Jesus used the born blind man to show God’s great work and Nick to expand his kingdom, how much more can God use us? May God help us to live for the glory of God and use our lives to display his great work.