



SUNDAY SCHOOL MARCH 15, 2026

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Old Testament: 1 Samuel 16:1-7

Context: Israel is in a moment of transition. Saul is still king, but God has rejected Saul's leadership. In this passage, God sends Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a new king from the family of Jesse. What follows is one of the Bible's clearest reminders that God does not judge by appearance, status, or human expectation, but by the heart.

DAVID ANOINTED AS KING

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."

Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me."

And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do, and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you."

Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?"

He said, "Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice."

And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely his anointed is now before the Lord."

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

OVERVIEW

1 Samuel 16:1-7 marks a turning point in Israel's story. Saul, the people's visible and impressive choice for king, has failed in obedience and humility. Samuel is grieving that failure, but God calls him to move forward. He is sent to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons. When Samuel sees Eliab, he assumes that surely this strong, impressive-looking son must be God's chosen one. But God corrects him with a principle that echoes throughout scripture: "The Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

This passage is not just about choosing David. It is about how God chooses, how humans misjudge, and how divine purpose often begins in unnoticed places and overlooked people.



BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Immediate Context Before the Passage

In 1 Samuel 15, Saul disobeys God concerning the Amalekites. He preserves what God told him to destroy and then tries to justify himself. The real issue is not merely a military mistake, but a heart problem: Saul values public image, political calculation, and selective obedience over full faithfulness. Samuel declares that obedience is better than sacrifice and announces that the kingdom will be torn from Saul and given to another.

The final verse before chapter 16 is emotionally important: Samuel grieves over Saul, and God regrets making Saul king. That grief sets the stage for 1 Samuel 16:1. God's first word is essentially: How long will you grieve? The story moves from mourning what has failed to preparing for what God will raise up next.

The Passage Itself: 1 Samuel 16:1-7

God instructs Samuel to fill his horn with oil and go to Bethlehem, to Jesse, because God has “provided” for himself a king among Jesse's sons. Samuel fears Saul's reaction, which reminds us this is politically dangerous. God gives Samuel a public reason for the trip: to offer sacrifice.

When Jesse's sons appear, Samuel is immediately impressed by Eliab. Eliab looks kingly in the same way Saul once did: tall, strong, outwardly impressive. But God rejects Samuel's instinct. Verse 7 becomes the theological center of the passage: humans see outward appearance; God sees the heart.

Immediate Context After the Passage

In verses 8-13, the pattern continues. One son after another is passed over until David, the youngest, is called in from tending sheep. He was not even considered important enough to invite at first. Yet he is the one God has chosen. Samuel anoints him, and the Spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon David from that day forward.

Immediately after this, verses 14 and following show the Spirit departing from Saul and David eventually entering Saul's court as a musician. This creates a deep narrative irony: the rejected king and the chosen king begin to share the same space.

Broader Narrative and Theological Context of 1 Samuel

The book of 1 Samuel is about leadership, covenant faithfulness, and the tension between human desire and divine rule. Israel wanted a king “like other nations.” Saul represented that desire: he looked the part. But the book gradually shows that visible impressiveness is not the same as covenant faithfulness.

1 Samuel repeatedly asks: What kind of leader does God desire? The answer is not perfection, but a heart oriented toward God. David will later fail badly too, but this passage introduces the central contrast: Saul embodies external kingship without inner surrender; David begins as hidden, unlikely, and heart-oriented.



Theologically, this chapter also reinforces a broader biblical theme: God often chooses the unexpected. The younger over the older. The overlooked over the celebrated. The shepherd over the warrior. The village of Bethlehem over the centers of power. This prepares the way not only for David, but eventually for Jesus.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

Historically, this passage likely reflects the early monarchy period in ancient Israel, around the late 11th to early 10th century BCE. Israel was transitioning from tribal confederation to centralized monarchy. Leadership was fragile, political loyalties were tense, and royal succession was dangerous.

Samuel's fear in verse 2 is politically realistic. Anointing a rival king while Saul still sits on the throne would have been seen as treason. This was not a symbolic church service. It was a potentially explosive political act.

Bethlehem itself was a small town in Judah, not a national center of power. That matters. God's next move begins away from the capital, away from the palace, away from elite visibility. In the ancient world, status usually came through birth order, visible strength, family prominence, and public reputation. The eldest son typically had priority. Eliab would have made cultural sense. David would not.

From a broader Ancient Near Eastern perspective, kingship was often tied to physical dominance, dynastic prestige, and military strength. The biblical text pushes against that expectation. Israel's God is not impressed by royal image-making.

Politically, the story also critiques the kind of leadership people often prefer. Saul had been selected in part because he fit public expectation. This passage suggests that societies are often drawn to what looks strong before they ask what is truly faithful, wise, and just.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

Here is a workable timeline for class discussion:

- Around 1200-1050 BCE: Period of the Judges
- Around 1050 BCE: Samuel emerges as prophet, judge, and national leader
- Around 1020-1010 BCE: Saul becomes Israel's first king
- Shortly after Saul's disobedience in 1 Samuel 15: Samuel is sent to anoint David
- Likely around 1010 BCE or slightly earlier: Events of 1 Samuel 16
- Around 1010-970 BCE: David's reign, first in Judah and then over all Israel

In terms of the book's composition, the events occur in the early monarchy, though the book likely reached written and edited form through a longer process, incorporating older court traditions, prophetic narratives, and later theological shaping.

BIBLE TRANSLATION UNDERSTANDING

Original Language and Dating

1 Samuel 16:1-7 was written in Biblical Hebrew. The underlying traditions are ancient, tied to the monarchy period, though the text as we have it likely passed through editorial development over time, probably reaching fuller literary shape during the monarchic or exilic periods.



Major Stages of English Translation

- **Wycliffe Bible (late 1300s):** translated from Latin rather than Hebrew and Greek
- **Tyndale (1500s):** helped shape later English biblical language, though his Old Testament work was incomplete
- **Geneva Bible (1560):** influential among Protestants
- **King James Version (1611):** deeply influential in English-speaking Christianity
- **Revised Standard Version / New Revised Standard Version:** sought more accuracy in modern English
- **NIV, ESV, CEB, NLT, and others:** modern translations balancing readability and textual precision in different ways

Important Translation Ideas in This Passage

“I have provided for myself a king” (verse 1)

The Hebrew carries the sense that God has “seen” or “provided” a king. There is a wordplay here with sight and perception that connects to verse 7. God has already “seen” the right king, while humans are still looking in the wrong places.

“Appearance” (verse 7)

The Hebrew word can refer to visible form, outward look, or what presents itself to the eyes. It is not just about physical beauty. It includes the whole surface-level impression a person makes.

“Heart” (verse 7)

This is especially important. In Hebrew thought, the “heart” is not merely the seat of emotion. It is the center of will, thought, intention, moral orientation, and inner self. So, when God looks at the heart, this is not sentimental language. It means God sees the true core of a person: motives, loyalties, and character.

That matters for interpretation. Modern readers often hear “heart” and think “feelings.” The Hebrew sense is deeper and broader: God sees the governing center of the person.

“Look on” versus “see”

Most English translations preserve the contrast between human seeing and divine seeing. That repetition is the point. The passage is about vision, misperception, and discernment. Humans are dazzled by what is visible. God sees truly.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Metaphorically, this passage is about mistaken measures of worth.

Samuel is a wise prophet, yet even he gets fooled by appearance. That is important. The passage does not merely criticize shallow people; it shows that even faithful, experienced, religious people can mistake charisma for calling, polish for substance, and appearance for depth.

In that sense, Eliab represents everything that looks right on paper. He is the candidate with presence. The one who would photograph well, speak well, seem natural in leadership. David, though not yet named in this section, represents hidden faithfulness. He is the one out in the field, unseen, uncelebrated, doing ordinary work.



That lands hard today.

In modern life, and certainly in a place like Grant County, we know how often people get judged by the obvious:

- who speaks best in public
- who has the right family name
- who looks respectable
- who has money, polish, or connections
- who “fits” what people expect a leader, Christian, or citizen should look like

Churches do this. Communities do this. Politics does this. Employers do this. Even families do this.

A person may look successful but be hollow at the center. Another may seem ordinary, awkward, quiet, or unimportant while carrying deep wisdom, integrity, and compassion.

Grant County has plenty of people whose gifts are not flashy. People who show up quietly. People who care for aging parents, volunteer at church dinners, mow a neighbor’s yard, sit with the lonely, keep the books straight, drive someone to an appointment, or keep a small congregation alive through steady faithfulness. They may never “look” important in the world’s eyes. But this passage suggests those are exactly the kinds of hearts God sees.

This text also speaks to how communities choose leaders. In a small town or county, it is easy to rely on reputation, family ties, personality, or who seems like “our kind of person.” But scripture presses harder: What is their heart? Are they humble? Trustworthy? Courageous? Teachable? Faithful when no one is watching?

The metaphor extends personally too. Many people live with the pain of being overlooked. Not chosen. Not invited in. Not recognized. This story says that being overlooked by people is not the same as being overlooked by God.

HOW SHOULD WE ACT AND REACT TO THIS SCRIPTURE TODAY?

We should act with more humility about our judgments. This passage warns us that our first impressions are often wrong. We should be slower to idolize appearances and quicker to ask deeper questions about character, integrity, faithfulness, and motive.

We should also become more attentive to overlooked people.

Churches especially should ask:

- Who are we not seeing?
- Who is doing faithful work quietly?
- Who have we dismissed because they do not fit our mental image of leadership or importance?

We should react to this scripture by repenting of shallow measures of worth. We live in a culture of branding, optics, image management, and performance. This text calls Christians to become people of deeper sight.

It also invites ***courage***. Samuel had to move beyond grief and fear into obedience. There are times when we too must stop only mourning what has gone wrong and begin discerning where God is working next.



And finally, we should take comfort. God sees beyond our resume, beyond our appearance, beyond the assumptions others make about us. That can be both convicting and healing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Why do you think Samuel was so sure Eliab was the right choice?*
2. *What does this passage teach us about the difference between human judgment and God's judgment?*
3. *In what ways do people today still choose leaders based on appearance or image?*
4. *What do you think "the Lord looks on the heart" really means?*
5. *Why do you think God so often chooses the overlooked person in scripture?*
6. *How might this passage challenge the church today?*
7. *Have you ever felt overlooked or underestimated? How does this scripture speak to that experience?*
8. *What are some outward appearances we rely on too much when judging others?*
9. *How can we become better at seeing people the way God sees them?*
10. *What might this scripture say to Grant County specifically?*



Gospel: John 9:13-25

Context: This passage picks up after Jesus has healed a man born blind. What should have been received as a sign of mercy becomes a controversy, as religious leaders focus less on the healing itself and more on whether Jesus violated their understanding of the Sabbath. The once-blind man is pulled into an investigation and begins to see more than just physically; he begins to perceive the difference between genuine work of God and rigid religious blindness.

THE PHARISEES INVESTIGATE THE HEALING

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight.

He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.”

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.”

Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?”

And they were divided. So, they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”

He said, “He is a prophet.”

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.”

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

So, for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.”

He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

OVERVIEW

John 9:13-25 is not only a story about a miraculous healing. It is a story about **conflict over truth, authority, testimony, and spiritual sight**. The healed man is brought before the Pharisees because the healing took place on the Sabbath, and instead of celebrating his restoration, the religious leaders begin interrogating him. They divide among themselves: some say Jesus cannot be from God because he does not keep their Sabbath rules, while others wonder how a sinner could perform such signs.



The man's parents are then questioned, and their fear becomes evident. They confirm that he is their son and that he was born blind, but they refuse to say more because they are afraid of being put out of the synagogue. Finally, the man is questioned again and gives his famous blunt testimony: **“One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”**

This passage shows that miracles do not automatically produce faith. Sometimes people can witness something extraordinary and still reject it if it threatens their system, status, or assumptions. It also shows the power of simple testimony. The healed man cannot yet explain every theology, but he knows what happened to him. That becomes enough to challenge the experts.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Immediate Context Before the Passage

The passage begins in the middle of the larger account in John 9. In **John 9:1-12**, Jesus encounters a man blind from birth. The disciples ask who sinned, the man or his parents, reflecting a common belief that suffering must be directly tied to personal guilt. Jesus rejects that framework and says the man's condition will become an occasion for “the works of God” to be revealed. Jesus makes mud, places it on the man's eyes, and tells him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man returns able to see.

That opening section matters greatly because it sets up the real issue. The healing is not merely about eyesight; it is about how people interpret suffering, sin, God's work, and authority. It also creates the controversy because the act occurs on the Sabbath and involves Jesus making mud, which some viewed as work.

Immediate Context of John 9:13-25

In this section, the formerly blind man is brought to the Pharisees. The story shifts from miracle to trial-like interrogation. The healed man becomes a witness, the parents become reluctant corroborators, and the Pharisees become investigators who already seem to know what answer they want.

There are really two healings unfolding:

- the man's **physical sight**
- the man's growing **spiritual insight**

At first he simply calls his healer “the man called Jesus” earlier in the chapter. Then in this section, when asked what he thinks, he says, **“He is a prophet.”** His understanding is growing. Meanwhile, the Pharisees, who physically see just fine, are becoming exposed as spiritually blind.

Immediate Context After the Passage

After verse 25, the questioning continues in **John 9:26-34**. The healed man becomes bolder and more confrontational. He asks if the authorities also want to become Jesus' disciples, which infuriates them. They insult him and eventually drive him out.

In **John 9:35-41**, Jesus finds him again. *This is one of the most important parts of the chapter: the one cast out by religious authorities is sought out by Jesus. The man comes to full faith and worships him. Then Jesus declares that he came so that those who do not see may see, and those who think they see may become blind. That closing statement gives the theological key to the whole chapter.*



Broader Context in the Gospel of John

John's Gospel repeatedly presents Jesus as the one who reveals the Father and forces a decision. John is built around signs, discourses, and mounting conflict. People are always sorting themselves in relation to Jesus: belief, confusion, hostility, fear, half-faith, or full surrender.

John 9 fits especially well with several major themes in the Gospel:

- **Light versus darkness:** Jesus has just said, "I am the light of the world" in John 8 and again in John 9:5.
- **True testimony:** John's Gospel cares deeply about witness. John the Baptist witnesses, the works witness, the Father witnesses, Scripture witnesses, and here the healed man becomes a witness.
- **Division over Jesus:** Jesus regularly causes division because he cannot be reduced to existing categories.
- **Reversal:** those considered outsiders often see more clearly than the religious insiders.

The chapter also anticipates later conflicts in John where fear of exclusion keeps people from openly confessing faith.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

This passage sits in the world of **Second Temple Judaism** under **Roman occupation**, likely in or around Jerusalem. Religious life was deeply structured around Torah, temple life, synagogue life, purity, and communal identity. The Sabbath was not a minor issue. It was one of the most important markers of Jewish covenant identity. In a world where foreign empires ruled over the Jewish people, Sabbath observance became even more precious as a sign of faithfulness and distinction.

That helps explain why the controversy is so intense. To modern readers, the religious leaders can seem absurdly nitpicky. But in their world, Sabbath was bound up with identity, holiness, and survival. Their mistake was not that Sabbath mattered; their mistake was that they had come to interpret Sabbath in a way that left too little room for mercy and too much room for control.

There is also a strong **social-political dimension** in the fear of being "put out of the synagogue." In that setting, exclusion from synagogue life was not just a matter of missing church. It could affect family relationships, trade relationships, reputation, and belonging in the community. Religious authority and social authority were tightly linked.

Scholars often note that John's Gospel was written in a period when followers of Jesus and some synagogue communities were experiencing sharp tensions. Even if the story reflects Jesus' own time, the Gospel's final form likely also speaks to later experiences of believers being marginalized. So this chapter is both about Jesus' ministry and about the cost of confessing him in a hostile environment.

The parents' fear makes much more sense in this light. Their caution is not mere weakness; it reflects the real danger of social and religious expulsion.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

In the Life of Jesus

This event likely occurs during Jesus' public ministry, probably in the final period leading toward the last Passover and crucifixion, around **AD 29-30**.



Broader Historical Setting

- **c. 4 BC-AD 30/33:** lifetime and ministry context of Jesus
- **AD 26-36:** Pontius Pilate governs Judea
- **First century AD:** growing tension among Jewish groups under Roman rule
- **Likely late first century AD:** the Gospel of John reaches written form, often dated somewhere around **AD 90-100**, though some scholars allow somewhat earlier layers or traditions behind it

Importance of That Timeframe

By the time John's Gospel is written, the early church has had decades to reflect on Jesus. The themes of witness, exclusion, confession, and conflict with religious authority would have had immediate relevance for Christian communities trying to remain faithful under pressure.

BIBLE TRANSLATION UNDERSTANDING

Original Language and Dating

John 9:13-25 comes to us in **Greek**, the common Greek of the eastern Roman Empire. Jesus probably spoke primarily Aramaic in daily life, but the Gospel itself was composed in Greek for a wider audience. As noted above, John is usually dated to the **late first century**, though it preserves earlier traditions and memories.

Major Stages of English Translation

A very brief arc:

- **Wycliffe Bible** (late 1300s): translated from Latin rather than Greek
- **Tyndale** (1520s-1530s): major turning point, translated from Greek into English
- **Geneva Bible** (1560): influential among Protestants
- **King James Version** (1611): monumental literary and ecclesial influence
- **Revised Version / American Standard Version** (19th-early 20th century): more text-critical precision
- **RSV / NRSV / NRSVue:** formal and scholarly
- **NIV / ESV / CSB / NLT:** modern translations balancing readability and accuracy in different ways

Theologically Significant Translation Choices

A few words and phrases matter here:

1. "Blind" / "See"

These are simple English words, but in John they carry layers beyond eyesight. They operate physically, morally, spiritually, and symbolically. To "see" can mean to perceive truth, to understand who Jesus is, to come to faith.

2. "Sinner"

The Pharisees say, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath," and later they treat Jesus as a "sinner." The Greek term carries moral and covenantal weight. It is not merely "someone imperfect" but someone judged to be outside proper obedience. John uses the irony heavily, because those calling Jesus a sinner are failing to recognize God's work in front of them.



3. “Prophet”

When the healed man says Jesus is a prophet, this is both a true confession and an incomplete one. In John, people often move toward deeper recognition step by step. “Prophet” is an advance over seeing Jesus merely as a man, but not yet the fullest confession of who he is.

4. “Give glory to God”

In verse 24, “Give glory to God!” can sound pious, but in context it functions almost like a formal demand to tell the truth according to the authorities’ framing. It has courtroom flavor. They are not neutrally inviting worship; they are pressuring the man to agree with their judgment.

5. “I do not know” / “One thing I know”

This contrast is powerful in Greek as in English. The healed man does not pretend to know everything. John often values this kind of honest, growing testimony. He does not have a complete system, but he has a true encounter.

Why Translation Matters Here

This passage loses some force if read as a flat historical report only. John deliberately uses language of sight, knowing, testimony, and judgment in layered ways. The healed man’s simple language is not simplistic. It becomes profound because John turns ordinary words into theological windows.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Metaphorically, this is a story about what happens when **an undeniable human change confronts an institution that would rather protect its assumptions than celebrate healing.**

The blind man represents the person whose lived experience disrupts inherited categories. He was once easy to define: blind, dependent, known by limitation, someone others could discuss from a distance. Once healed, he becomes complicated. Now the system has to explain him. And rather than rejoice, the authorities interrogate.

That happens all the time now.

Sometimes a person changes, grows, heals, repents, becomes more compassionate, escapes addiction, challenges old prejudice, or sees the world differently after suffering. Instead of celebrating that transformation, communities sometimes react by saying:

- “That’s not how we do things.”
- “Who gave you the right to speak?”
- “You must be mistaken.”
- “Stay in your lane.”
- “We don’t trust your experience if it threatens our worldview.”

So, the deeper metaphor is this: some people gain sight, while others cling to their blindness because blindness protects their power.

Grant County / Small-Town Application

In a place like Grant County, where community reputation, belonging, church culture, family names, and local history all matter, this passage lands close to home. In smaller communities, people are often known by their roles, labels, weaknesses, family associations, or past mistakes. When someone changes, people may struggle to let them become new.



A person might be known as:

- the addict
- the troublemaker
- the outsider
- the poor family's kid
- the one who had a scandal
- the one from that side of town
- the one who "used to be" something

And when that person begins to see differently, act differently, or speak with unexpected wisdom, the community sometimes reacts like the Pharisees: not with joy, but with suspicion.

The parents' fear also feels very modern in a small-town setting. People know the cost of saying the wrong thing publicly. They know how quickly someone can be shut out, talked about, or quietly pushed to the edge. That is not limited to church life, but church life certainly can reflect it.

A scholarly metaphorical reading would say this passage is not just about religion versus irreligion. It is about **systems of certainty versus the disruptive evidence of grace**. It asks whether we would rather preserve our categories or welcome what God is doing in front of us.

HOW SHOULD WE ACT AND REACT TO THIS SCRIPTURE TODAY?

We should respond in at least five ways.

1. Celebrate healing before analyzing it to death

There is a place for discernment, but there is also a danger in being so committed to procedure, doctrine, politics, or tradition that we miss mercy when it happens.

2. Respect honest testimony

The healed man does not know everything, but he knows what happened to him. Christians should make room for testimony that is real, humble, and still developing.

3. Beware spiritual pride

The Pharisees' deepest problem is not caution; it is certainty mixed with arrogance. They assume they already know what God can and cannot do.

4. Notice how fear silences people

The parents remind us that many people stay quiet not because they have nothing to say, but because the cost of speaking feels too high. Churches should become places where truth can be spoken without immediate punishment.

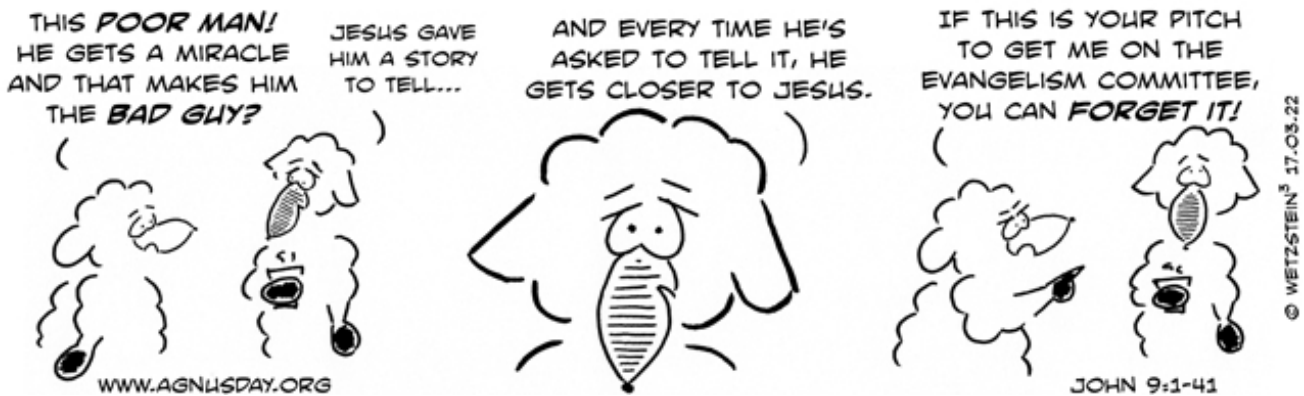
5. Let Jesus redefine who counts as credible

The religious experts think they own truth, yet in this passage the clearest witness is the man who used to sit blind and beg. God often speaks through those respectable people overlook.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the Pharisees had such a hard time celebrating the man's healing?
2. What does this passage say about the difference between physical sight and spiritual sight?
3. Why were the parents so afraid to speak openly?
4. Have you ever seen a church or community focus more on rules, image, or control than on healing and mercy?
5. Why is the healed man's testimony so powerful even though he cannot answer every question?
6. What are some modern ways people get "put out of the synagogue," meaning excluded, shamed, or marginalized?
7. When does careful discernment become stubborn resistance to God?
8. How can churches make room for people whose stories challenge old assumptions?
9. What labels do communities place on people that make it hard to see what God may be doing in them now?
10. What does "though I was blind, now I see" mean beyond the literal story?





Addendums

1 Samuel 16:1-7 — If It Were Said Today

“God said to Samuel, ‘How long are you going to stay stuck grieving over Saul? I have already decided to move on from him as king over Israel. Take your flask of oil and go to Bethlehem. I’m sending you to Jesse, because I have chosen one of his sons to be king.’

Samuel said, ‘How can I do that? If Saul hears about it, he’ll kill me.’

God said, ‘Take a sacrifice with you and say you’ve come to worship. Invite Jesse to the gathering, and I’ll show you what to do next. You are to anoint the one I point out to you.’

Samuel did what God said. When he came to Bethlehem, the town elders were nervous and asked, ‘Are you coming in peace?’

He said, ‘In peace. I’ve come to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. Get yourselves ready and come worship with me.’ Then he made sure Jesse and his sons were included.

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, ‘This has to be the one. He looks exactly like a king.’

But God said to Samuel, ‘Don’t be impressed by how he looks or how strong he seems. I’m not choosing him. I don’t judge people the way humans do. People focus on what they can see on the outside, but I look at what’s going on inside a person. I look at the heart.’”

John 9:13-25 — If It Were Said Today

They took the man who had been blind to the religious leaders.

The day Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes happened to be the Sabbath.

So the leaders asked him again how he had come to see.

He said, “He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I can see.”

Some of them said, “This man cannot be from God, because he does not follow our Sabbath rules.”

Others said, “How could someone against God do something like this?”

And they were divided.

So they turned back to the man and asked, “What do you say about him? He opened your eyes.”

The man said, “I think he is a prophet.”

But they still refused to believe he had really been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents.

They asked them, “Is this your son? Was he really born blind? So how is he seeing now?”

His parents answered, “Yes, this is our son, and yes, he was born blind. But we do not know how he sees now, and we do not know who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.”

They said this because they were afraid. The leaders had already made it clear that anyone who openly said Jesus was the Messiah could be thrown out of the synagogue.

That is why his parents said, “He is old enough. Ask him.”

So they called the man in a second time and said, “Tell the truth before God. We know this Jesus is a sinner.”

The man answered, “I do not know all that. But I know this: I used to be blind, and now I see.”



Seeing vs. Not Seeing / Connecting 1 Samuel 16:1–7 with John 9:13–25

Both of this week's scriptures revolve around the same surprising theme: **what it means to truly see.**

In **1 Samuel 16**, Samuel looks at Jesse's oldest son and immediately assumes he must be the future king. He looks the part. He appears strong, confident, and leader-like. But God corrects Samuel with a profound statement:

"People look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

In other words, **Samuel can see Eliab's appearance, but he cannot see the deeper truth about who he really is.**

Now compare that with **John 9**.

In that story, Jesus heals a man who has been blind since birth. The miracle is undeniable. The man can now see. But instead of celebrating, the religious leaders interrogate him. They question him repeatedly, trying to find a way to discredit what happened.

The irony is striking.

The man who **was physically blind now sees clearly**, while the religious authorities who **have perfectly functioning eyes cannot see what God is doing right in front of them.**

So, in these two passages we see two different kinds of vision:

- **Samuel initially sees with human eyes but must learn to see with God's perspective.**
- **The Pharisees see with their eyes but refuse to see with their hearts.**

Both stories challenge a common human mistake: **confusing surface appearance with deeper truth.**

Samuel assumes Eliab is the right choice because he looks impressive.

The Pharisees assume Jesus cannot be from God because the healing violates their expectations.

In both cases, expectations block perception.

The deeper message is that spiritual vision requires humility. It requires the willingness to say:

"I might be wrong about what I think I'm seeing."

That idea still applies today.

In communities like **Grant County**, we often think we know who the important people are, who the leaders should be, or who God is most likely to work through. But scripture repeatedly shows God working through people others overlook — shepherds, fishermen, outsiders, and ordinary villagers.

And sometimes the people who think they understand everything — the experts, the insiders, the confident voices — are the very ones missing what God is doing.

So together these passages raise a quiet but powerful question for us: ***Are we looking at people the way the world looks at them... or are we trying to see the way God sees?***

And maybe an even harder question:

Is there something God is doing right in front of us that we might be missing because it doesn't look the way we expected?