

John Chapters 8-9: Jesus Heals

From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on John

In John Chapter 9, Jesus and his disciples see a man born blind. The disciples look on him as a case study on the sources of sin. They wonder who sinned to land the man in this predicament. Jesus looks on the man with compassion and works to remedy his condition.

Christ's unusual method of healing show that the world of flesh-and-bone — and mud — is God's kingdom. Jesus' method — mixing spit with dirt and putting it on the man's eyes — echos the creation of mankind in Genesis 2:7. In both biblical and Greek tradition, mud (pēlos) is used to describe what people are made of.

Elsewhere, John revisits the controversy familiar from Matthew, Mark, and Luke regarding healing on the Sabbath. Jesus' self-defense is crisply summarized in John 5:17, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." The principle is clear. God keeps the creation going even on the Sabbath, and therefore Jesus, who shares the divine identity, is permitted to do the same.

When Jesus permits the man to carry a mat—a form of work, according to the Jewish Law—it is not that Jesus is merely widening the list of activities permitted on the Sabbath. Rather, work that maintains and redeems the creation, and contributes to closer relationships with God and people is appropriate anytime.

A clear and important lesson for us is that God is still at work to maintain the present creation, and Jesus furthers that work in his healing ministry. Jesus' signs demonstrate the powers of the age to come, as they also up-keep the present world. It seems perfectly appropriate to see this as a paradigm for our own jobs. Nurses and auto mechanics act in faith to restore what has been broken. Programmers and teachers act in faith to develop the capacities of the creation. When done in faith, the work of

redemption and creation point people to God. God created all things through Christ, is restoring them to his original intent through Christ, and will bring them to their appointed goal through Christ.