

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

Today's Gospel is all about "**a man blind from birth**" (9:1).

He was a beggar—  
no one hires a blind man to do his taxes,  
or put in the kitchen cabinets,  
or fix the downstairs plumbing.

If you're blind, especially in the ancient world, you're a beggar.  
You spend your days in the streets,  
sitting with a cup in your hand, waiting for some kind soul to drop in a dime or two.  
Food's difficult to come by,  
as is a warm place to lay your head at night.  
Your parents have rejected you,  
you can't carry on the family business,  
you're a disgrace,  
you must be cursed by God—  
and no one wants a curse hanging around the house.

If you're blind, you're alone, and scared, and angry.

And so, when "**Jesus passed by, His disciples naturally asked Him,**  
**'Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'**" (9:2)

Someone must have done something bad for the Lord to send such a curse.  
That's the way they thought back then.  
If you're born blind, or lame, or deaf,  
you (or more likely, your parents) must have sinned greatly.

And, unfortunately, that sort of thinking hasn't left us.

Maybe we're not as bad as this—  
we'll say it's not your fault to be *born* with a disease, or disability.

But, for example, look at how the world reacts to other disasters.  
When the Tsunami and earthquake hit Japan,  
some said it was God punishing a country of Atheists,  
others said it was their pride and affluence.

Again, who sinned?  
Those who died in the earthquake and tsunami, or their parents?

How about when Hurricane Katrina struck?

“Oh, it was because New Orleans was the ‘Sin City’ of America! They really had it coming.”

No!

That’s not the way our Lord works!

He doesn’t work tit for tat!

He’s not up in heaven, tallying up all our sins, and devising evil ways to punish us in equal measure!

The Lord doesn’t believe in Karma and your sin is already paid for.

The man was born blind, *not* because he sinned or his parents

(though, to be sure, both were sinful from birth),

but he was born blind, **“So that the works of God be displayed in him”** (9:3).

What are those works of God?

Well, our Gospel gives us two in particular,

both coming from Christ, who is **“the Light of the World”** (9:5).

The first work done is the lesser work,

Jesus gives sight to the blind man:

**“Having said these things, He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then He anointed the man’s eyes with the mud and said to him,**

**‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which means Sent).**

**So he went and washed and came back seeing”** (9:6-7).

This miracle of sight, you must remember, is the lesser work.

It serves as an introduction to the greater work He has in store.

This sight to the blind starts up the real conversation Jesus wants to have.

Much like last week, when Jesus told the Samaritan Woman to get her husband,

He wasn’t primarily trying to make her feel bad or guilty,

that’s just the way He could get her to believe who He is.

Same with the blind man.

Jesus uses this gift of physical sight to strike up a conversation about spiritual sight.

But first, those pesky Pharisees get in the middle of it.

The Pharisees also think that all blind men are sinners (or at least their parents are).

God doesn’t listen or reveal Himself to sinners (9:31)—

He doesn’t bless those who beg or help those who suffer—

it’s their own fault, they’ve had it coming—so think the Pharisees.

And so, when the Pharisees heard from some in the neighborhood that the blind man could see, they immediately knew it couldn’t be.

“Oh, and on the Sabbath on top if it all—

not a chance!”

**“So they said to him,  
 ‘Then how were your eyes opened?’  
 The blind man answered,  
 ‘The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me,  
 ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’  
 ‘So I went and washed and received my sight’”** (9:10-11).

But who could believe this nonsense?  
 No one spits on the ground, rubs some mud on the eyes, and washes in some pool and miraculously gets healed!

It just doesn't work that way!

And so the Pharisees went a few rounds trying to poke holes in the blind man's testimony, they doubted he was actually born that way,  
 so they brought in the parents,  
 they doubted the miracle was good, thinking Jesus had a devil or something,  
**“But, how can a man who is a sinner do such signs?”** (9:16)  
 Finally, they call the man a liar, cast him out of the synagogue—excommunication—and that's that.

We'd rather ignore what we can't figure out,  
 what we can't fit into our reason, or what scares us,  
 and so we get rid of it—  
 out of sight out of mind.

And now, for the much greater work than simply healing a blind man's sight,  
**“When Jesus heard that they had cast him out He said,  
 ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’”** (9:35)

This is what the miracle was all about.  
 Just a long introduction to the real meat of the story!

**“The blind man answered, ‘And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?’  
 Jesus said to him, ‘You have *seen* Him, and it is He who is speaking to you.’  
 The blind man said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped Jesus”** (9:35-38).

The whole miracle of sight, was simply so that the blind beggar could *see* Jesus and *believe*.

What makes this whole reading so unique, is the way our Lord turns everything on its head.

We think the disasters and the diseases,  
 the deaths and the destruction around us,  
 is someone's fault.

And yet, our good and gracious Lord always sends these for good, for blessing,  
 so that the works of God might be displayed in them.

We think that if someone is to be cured of their blindness,  
 it ought to be on account of an extremely expensive surgery,  
 done by the best doctors out in California or the East Coast,  
 and serve as a marvel of modern medicine.

Jesus does it with spit, mud, and a common pool.  
 “Go and wash.”

But where we go most wrong, where we are most in danger of losing body and soul,  
 is by thinking that we can see,  
 that we’re not blind.

Jesus says at the end of our reading,  
 “For judgment I came into this world,  
 that those who do not see may see,  
*and those who see may become blind*” (9:39).

It’s best to be blind.  
 It’s best to be a sinner.  
 It’s best to come as a beggar,  
 lonely, broken, helpless, hungry, and rejected.

For your Lord, Jesus Christ, loves to heal and save poor beggars.

He does it so simply without any pomp or circumstance,  
 He spits on the ground,  
 rubs you with mud,  
 and tells you go wash all your sin away in an ordinary font.

He opens your eyes, enlightens you, and says,  
 “Your guilt is taken away, your sight is restored, your weakness is healed, and your sin is  
 paid for.  
 You have seen Him and it is He who is speaking to you.”

You who are broken are made whole by this Christ.  
 You who are lonely and rejected are children of the heavenly Father.  
 You who are repentant, who confess your sins, are forgiven.

And now you’re sent into this world with a very simple testimony,  
 “**One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see**” (9:25).

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