Sermons at Christ Church

Lord, Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace.

Lent IV
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"I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." This was the response of a blind man who had been healed by Jesus. He has been blind all his life. It was considered that human impairment was the result of sin. That explains why the disciples ask the question *"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind*?"

Later in the story the Pharisees also accused the blind man *"You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?"* For both the disciples and the Pharisees, sin played an important part in the present circumstances of the blind man. Jesus on the other hand looked at the man's condition as a means by which the glory of God would be made manifest.

I believe therefore that whatever circumstance in which we find ourselves, often as horrible as it may be, it is also a means by which God's glory can be made manifest in our lives. God doesn't cast us away whether we have a disability or not. God doesn't cast us away because of our sins. God doesn't disown us because of our brokenness.

God heals our brokenness, God heals our infirmities, and God heals our blindness, just so with our eyes open, we may believe, we may see the best in ourselves, the best in each other and in the God who is our shepherd.

What the blind man saw after his eyes were opened was not the darkness which his eyes were used to, but a new light which provided him with a language with which he could profess his belief.

The Pharisees who doubted the miracle invited his parents to confirm that indeed the healed man was their son. After confirming his identity with his parents, they invited the man again for further questioning-if indeed, he was the blind man who had been healed. What took the conversation to the deep end was the question about whether his healer-Jesus, was a sinner.

They began the preface to this particular question by inviting the once blind man to give glory to God, and to declare if Jesus was a sinner. *"I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."* The blind man may have asked himself, of what benefit was that to him if the man who healed him was a sinner? What has Jesus' sins got to do with his healing?

One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. The blind man was emphatic. Once I was blind but now I see. Once I lived in fear, now I live in love. Once I was deaf, now I hear. Once I was lame, now I walk. Once I lived in scarcity, now I live in abundance. Once I was a leper but now I have been made whole.

The blind man's confession and all our confessions talks about the transformation that is possible because of Jesus Christ. It is a confession of what we can speak of about ourselves and others. The triumph we have experienced in life because of the gift of someone. The healing that has come our way because of the gift of another person. The job that we have because of someone. The renewal that has been made possible because of another person.

The sense of direction that we have in our lives because of the wisdom of someone. The blessings that we feel in our lives because of the graciousness of another person. The progress we have made because someone believed in us. We want to believe that not only do people have the eyes to see us, but we can hear them point us to the place of refreshment, renewal and healing.

We want to believe that people of goodwill have provided us with the tools with which to live. When I served in Columbia, SC, there was a young boy who wasn't born blind but he grew progressively blind.

His mother I believe died in childbirth. But he had a dutiful father who was actually a friend. His father will take me and another friend to his country house where we would shoot birds and enjoy a quiet day.

Because of the relationship between his father and myself, I came to know Walker as a strong kid with such an amazing persevering spirit. Walker didn't see as much but it wasn't an impediment for him. I remember I once saw someone helping walking use the white-cane on a street in Columbia- this man was teaching Walker how to use the White-cane. He was preparing him for the challenges that lay ahead of him. In spite of his impairment, Walker graduated college a few years ago from Georgetown University.

Walker is thriving because somebody more than taught him how to use the white-cane. Somebody saw him. Somebody heard him and he was willing to believe that he can see with his white cane. You can also see somebody, you can also hear somebody but can you direct them to go and wash in Siloam?

Listen to the blind man, indeed, not since ancient times has it been said, that someone who was born blind has been healed. If I was born in sin, just like all blind people and those who are physically impaired are considered to be, then there may not be the possibility of redemption or healing for us.

But Jesus, with the healing of the blind man questions the basic assumption that those who are impaired may have been born out of sin. The healing reveals to us that the glory of God is made manifest in both the physically fit and impaired. The healing of the blind man reveals to us that God doesn't cast us away because of our ailment. In fact, God does the exact opposite. The healing affirms for us that God doesn't see the same way that humans see and that we cannot question the miracle of others because we think those people are sinful and so do not have value in God's eyes.

In the Old Testament story, Samuel grieves over the rejection of Saul. But understand that it is not a rejection of his person, as broken as he may be, it is a rejection of his ability to serve. Samuel wonders why God doesn't see Saul in just the same way that he sees Saul.

In spite of his disappointment Samuel visits Jesse, and invites him to call each of his sons. One after the other he calls out his sons. But we make the same mistake, we look at the appearance and assume that God is interested in what we find to be attractive.

If we didn't know that appearance has little to no value to God, now we know. Now we know that God looks at the heart-the place of innocence, purity and compassion. After all the older sons had been rejected, Samuel asked Jesse if there's any more sons left. He responded that there's one more son who is tending sheep.

In that ancient world, the shepherd was the symbol of a king and the greatest irony of the story is that the one who was the least thought about was the one who was fulfilling his vocation even before he was anointed as king.

The moment Samuel saw David, the word of the Lord alerted Samuel that David was the man, arise and anoint him. Later on in the life of David, we will learn that he wasn't a perfect man nor was he a perfect king. But it was God who chose him. And being a man who was ruddy, handsome and with beautiful eyes didn't in anyway mean that God valued him more than the blind man Jesus healed today.

See, we may all have some disability but the beauty of the good news is that God embraces, heals and makes us fit for His kingdom and His purpose. The blind man knew that Jesus was fit for purpose. And so Jesus being a sinner was not important to him.

What was important to him was whether Jesus' sins were enough to prevent God from using Jesus to heal him. What is important isn't how sinful you are, but whether you can avail yourself for God to use you for God's divine purpose.

Three things that I want you to take from the story-first, the blind man heard Jesus ask him to go and wash-and he did. Second, the blind man saw Jesus and everyone he knew for the first time after he washed. Third, the blind man believed in Jesus after Jesus revealed himself to him as the Messiah. "Yes Lord, I believe." Was his confession.

When was the last time you confessed your belief? Don't tell me about the creed. When was the last time you said to yourself, in the quietness of your heart, away from the busy world, in the comfort of your own personal space did you confess-Yes, Lord. I believe? *One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.*

And because I can now see, I can believe and boldly confess that the Lord is indeed my shepherd, therefore I shall lack nothing. I can now walk in the paths of righteousness because I live as a child of light. He anoints my head with oil and assures me of His loving embrace and acceptance. If I didn't notice God's goodness and mercy, now I do, because they follow me wherever you go. And if I didn't know where to dwell, with my eyes open, now I do. It is in His house would I dwell forever more. Amen.