

Mar 2 08 Communion John 9:1-41 Fourth Lent

## WHO'S BLIND?

I want you to close your eyes or cover your eyes so you can't see. Now don't drop off and take a nap on me. But just imagine if I asked you to get up and come to the altar with your eyes shut. Many of you would bump into each other or the pew or trip over something. Many of you would just stay in your seats. Now open your eyes. Isn't it wonderful to see? Look around and see the beauty in this church. Look at the beauty of the stain glass windows. Look at the faces of the people who have gathered here today and see their smiling faces. Tell the person next to you they look marvelous. Well most of them anyway. Seeing is wonderful! While at Cracker Barrel on Friday night my granddaughter pointed out the wonderful sunset we were experiencing through the window. We wear glasses in order to see better. The hardest question one might be faced with is would you rather be blind or deaf? Some want to hear everything. Others would rather see everything. Tough question. Tough one to answer.

Let me read this mornings story about a blind man from John 9. Once again I'm reading from the Message translation.

This morning a blind man is the focus of our Lenten devotion. This man has been born blind from birth. He never had a chance to see his mother's face nor his siblings, nor his dad. As Jesus and his disciples were walking along Jesus saw this man was begging for a handout and because of a question from the disciples of why this man was born blind, Jesus turns this into an opportunity to teach them a deeper lesson about who really is blind. Next thing you know Jesus spits and makes a mud ball and places it on the eyes of the blind man and sends him off to wash in an ordinary pool.

Have you ever had something get in your eyes? It's pretty irritating. What do you do? You use your finger to try and wipe it out. If that does not work you either use eye drops or you wash your face and try to rinse it out. Well, so did this guy. I picture him stumbling off to the pool bumping into people and things because his eyes hurt and he wants to wash them out as quickly as he can. Now we also see that Jesus did not tell him to go and wash and you will receive your sight. He only says, "Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam." In those days some say this was a way to heal blindness. The blind man was totally unprepared for what happened. The next picture I get of this blind man is that he gets to the pool and begins to wash his face and with each wash of his eyes he begins to see light, then shadows of trees and figures. Then all of a sudden he could see everything. For the first time in his

life he could see the sky, the sun, the trees, the birds that were singing and of course, people's faces. He could see the shops. He could see the happy faces, the sad faces. He could see the bakery goods that he often would smell on his way to his begging station. He could even see the winding road on which he traveled to get to this pool. No wonder he bumped into so many things and had bruises to prove it. So now he makes his way back to Jesus. As he traveled he passed his neighbors who knew him since his birth, and knew he was born blind. He didn't recognize them because he had never seen their faces. They could see the smile on his face as he bids everyone good morning because now he can see their faces. They think, "This can't be the same man who is our neighbor. Our neighbor is blind. This man can see. It looks like him, but it can't be. It really can't be!" So they stopped him and asked his name and when they realized it was the same man they were astonished. When they asked how it happened the ex-blind man excitedly replied, "A man named Jesus touched my eyes and all I know is that once I was blind but now I see."

Then we know the rest of the story. The religious leaders did not believe he was blind at all and this was all a hoax. They even called for his parents and questioned them. And for the first time he found out what his parents looked like. He went up to them and held their faces in his hands as they ran over those same eyes and same noses

and same mouths that he did when he was blind. Now he didn't have to draw his own picture of what they looked like. Now he could see them face to face. So the parents confirmed that their son was born blind, yet the religious leaders didn't believe them.

Let's move to the conversation the ex-blind man had with Jesus. For you see, this whole miracle caused an uproar with the religious community. For a miracle had happened amongst them and they were questioning that miracle. So when this blind man finally met Jesus he was overwhelmed with praise and thanks. But it wasn't the physical sight that became the central focus of this man's life. It was his spiritual awakening. Maybe this man thought he was being punished by God for something his parents did. Maybe this was reinforced by the religious leaders when he questioned them about his being born blind. All they could say was, "well, either you have sinned or else your parents sinned. That's how God works." But Jesus told the disciples he was born blind for just a moment like this so that God could be glorified.

Now that he can see, he faces Jesus, but didn't know it. When Jesus asks "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said "you have seen him; in

fact he is the one speaking to you.” Then the man said, “Lord, I believe” and he worshipped him.” You see, the blinders fell off from his blind heart and he had a spiritual awakening.

Isn't this an amazing story of faith? Why do I say that? Because we see this blind man goes from no faith to complete faith in God. His journey took him through a pool where he washed in order to see. Jesus touched his eyes with that mud and the irritation made him follow Jesus' instruction. And what did he find? He found his sight. Oh, it wasn't just his physical sight. He found his spiritual sight as well. For as you have heard me read, he believed in Jesus. It took a miracle. But he believed.

And on the other side we see those who had their sight were the ones who were really blind. The religious leaders were blinded to the fact that Jesus was doing the work of God. They questioned his faith. They questioned his knowledge of the Law of God because he healed someone on the Sabbath and that was a no-no. They were the ones who were blind.

My friends, there are many spiritual blind people in this world. They fail to see God's mighty hand at work amongst them. They fail to see the many miracles that come across their lives and the lives of others. And when

they do see one, they want to find out how and why. They want to minimize it. You see, sometimes they are blind to the things of God.

Fanny Crosby was two months old when she became ill and the family doctor was away. Another man pretending to be a certified doctor treated her by prescribing medicine that eventually caused her to be blind the rest of her life. But even though she was physically blind, God gifted her with spiritual insight. She wrote over 9,000 hymns and many poems, even for presidents. Some you know well. Some like “To God Be the Glory,” or “Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross,” or “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior,” or “Close to Thee,” or “I Am Thine, O Lord,” or “Be Thou My Vision,” and of course, everyone’s favorite, “Blessed Assurance.”

A preacher once said to her “I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when he showered so many other gifts upon you.” Fanny responded with, “Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I was born blind? Because when I get to heaven the first face that shall gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.” Listen to one of her poems she wrote.

“Oh, what a happy soul I am, Although I cannot see!--- I am resolved that in this world Contented I will be.-  
-- How many blessings I enjoy that other people don't,--- to weep and sigh because I'm blind I cannot, and I  
won't!”

Isn't it amazing how spiritually blind the religious leaders were and how often they confronted Jesus? And they weren't the only ones. Many others were spiritually blind as well. The Rich Young Ruler was so blinded by his own wealth that he gave up the gift of eternal life instead of his wealth.

The first line of John Newton's great hymn states, “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a  
wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.”

That was his story of conversion. He is like the Prodigal Son who became blinded by the joy he thought his inheritance could give him until it ran out and he found himself sitting in the pig sty eating their food. But while there, at the lowest of lows, his eyes were opened to the fact that his father's servants had it better than he had, so he thought if he returned home maybe his father would forgive him and give him a job. Well you know the rest of the story because when he was on his way up the driveway his father ran and grabbed him around the waist and

danced around and around with him and his father yelled out to get the party started for the one who was lost was found. The one who was blind can now see.

My friends, this story help us to open our eyes to see not just the miracle of this man receiving his physical sight. It is the miracle of his receiving his spiritual sight. And that is what Lent is all about. For Jesus went to the cross to give us our sight as well that leads to the cross of Jesus. For as we know, God sent his Son so that whoever would believe in him shall have eternal life.

So this communion morning may the line from our closing hymn be your prayer. “Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me; place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free. Silently now I wait for thee, ready my God thy will to see. Open my eyes illumine me, Spirit of God.” So shall it be for God’s people this morning at this altar of Grace where the blind shall see. Amen!