

The Man Born Blind

Fourth Sunday in Lent

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First, there was Nicodemus, Pharisee and teacher, then the woman at the well, and today, it is a man who was born blind that takes the witness stand. The issue is who Jesus is, and John, through his Gospel, is bringing forth the testimony of those who had encountered Jesus and were ready to affirm his divinity.

This Man born Blind is an exciting witness, for as the disciple's conversation with Jesus at the beginning indicated, Blindness or disability was a sign of God's displeasure. Such a disability could only be the result of sin. Indeed, said the disciples, either this man or his parents were sinners.

Such a sinner could not be a credible witness, for what is someone caught up in all these things going to know about the things of God? And yet this is the paradox of Jesus. Jesus was not the property of the religious but of the sinner. The religious community could not accept him.

This story is all about blindness, not that of the visually impaired but the blindness that comes from the prejudiced heart. The blindness that refuses to see, and not that which cannot see. It is the blindness that denies the evidence and has pride in its own ability and self-capacity.

I believe that John tells this story well and needs little explanation, so I want to spend a little time thinking about blindness in our day and age.

Blindness, in the simplest terms, is about the failure to recognise or identify the light. In baptism, we talk about light and darkness. Light is where God is, and darkness is where he is not—the blind lives in the dark world, the world without God. The Pharisees, who had pride in their religious learning, could not recognise the light in Jesus. It is easy for us to transfer this image to the modern world. We all know religious people. People who never let the commands of the Gospel get in the way of practising religion. Often we call them fundamentalists, but even those of more modest opinion can lose sight of Jesus when they bind him up in rules and regulations. Much of the battle in today's church is when human precepts are treated as God's truths. Those in the world see clearly our failures and justly condemn us. Sadly, not everyone who goes to church is a Christian.

But another blindness is also dangerous. We have taught our children to think logically and rationally for many years. Science and scientific methods are valuable, but we must take care that we consider them as one of many ways to look at things. Many in this world are blind to the possibilities of faith - equally blind as the religiously rigid. In a world without faith and without God, it is easy. Sin - is not a problem.

Son of Man - This is John's epithet for the Messiah - the chosen one of God. When Jesus found the man after he was thrown out of the temple, the Question he asked was not - Can you see? Or - What do you see? But - Do you believe in the Son of Man?

Do you believe it?

His faith had made him well and made him whole because Jesus told him to go, so he went and was healed.

The closing exchange is the path to faith.

Jesus asks, "Do you believe?"

We answer, "And who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him." *37 Jesus reveals himself, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."*

And we respond, "Lord, I believe." And worship him.

Our Journey to find Jesus comes when we start to look for him. The blind can look for no one. True sight is in the one looking for God. And to the one who looks, Jesus will reveal himself so we can respond and worship.

And for all of us, the question that God's word asks us today is to look inside ourselves; deeply inside ourselves - are we blind? Or can we see?

AMEN