

Sermon: **MAY WE BECOME BLIND**

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John 9.1-41:

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. **4** We must work the works of the One who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." **10** But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his

disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains. "

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Ephesians says, "Once you were darkness but now you are light." Not just that you are *in* the light or even just that you have light in you, but you *are* light. Jesus says, "As long as it is day we must do the work of the one who sent us and then it will be night." Your day, your life, is the time you have to love and to heal and to bless; and when your night comes, when your light is no more it will be too late. So let there be some urgency about your life: now is the time to bless and to heal while you can, to see to it that you are the light of God in this world. "Let your light so shine that others may see and glorify God."

The Gospel of John tells us this story full of humorous irony in which the people who "can see" can't see what the blind man can see. They can't see the miracle that just happened. They're blind to it. They're all concerned about what they think about this man and whether he's the person that they've already decided he is or not. They can't see anything else.

We are not much less foolish than that. We have ideas and assumptions and prejudices and judgments about people, and we see our assumptions and our judgments more clearly than we see the actual person. We decide pretty easily whether they're somebody that we like or don't like, agree with or don't agree with. We give enough attention to make that judgment and then we stop listening. We don't see them for who they really are.

There's a part of each one of us that is that part of us nobody sees. Sometimes we like it that way. There's a part of us that we don't want others to see because we're afraid they wouldn't like it. But there are people whose whole lives are unseen. There are people who we simply don't notice because we choose not to see them, because of our judgments.

I think I've told you before about walking toward the church once in this little town in Montana. Coming up the road from the river in the other direction was this scruffy, raggedy looking guy with a bundle and a pole or a stick over his shoulder. I instantly thought, "Oh another homeless person coming to ask for money." I didn't want to see him. I wasn't in the mood at the moment. Then he got closer and I realized he wasn't a hobo, but just a fisherman who'd been down by the river. I noticed how I had quickly decided who he was by the first glimpse and wasn't ready to really see him, meet him, hear his story, find out who he was.

I think of all the people in this world who are not seen because they're different, or threatening, so we just don't see them. So I pray for the compassion and the humility and the curiosity to really see people and find out who they are, all those people whom we haven't really seen.

It's hard for us to live with people who see things differently than we see them. We see that going on in Washington D.C. and it drives us nuts— but we're not much better. We have a hard time listening to those who see things differently and really listen to them, to hear them, to learn from them. It's so easy to think that we know everything we need to know. The hard thing is that even if we think we know all the facts that we need to know, there's more than that to listen to. There's who they are. So we pray for the humility to continue to listen, especially to people who see things differently than we do. After all, that's what God does with us.

Jesus is always saying things that he shouldn't have. It's wonderful that he says, "I have come so that those who are blind may see," but then he goes on to say, "And so that those who see might become blind." I pray for Jesus to blind me that I might become blind to all of my judgments and assumptions and opinions and beliefs, utterly blind to them all, so that I don't know, so that I have to feel my way through. I pray that Jesus will blind me to all of my judgments so that I have to listen. I pray that being blind to everything I think I already know I will see anew as if for the first time.