

So That Those Who Do Not See May See
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John 9:1-41

¹As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ²His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ³Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ ⁶When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, ⁷saying to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸The 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?’ ⁹Some were saying, ‘It is he.’ Others were saying, ‘No, but it is someone like him.’ He kept saying, ‘I am the man.’ ¹⁰But they kept asking him, ‘Then how were your eyes opened?’ ¹¹He 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.’ ¹²They said to him, ‘Where is he?’ He said, ‘I do not know.’

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵Then 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.’ ¹⁶Some 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. ¹⁷So 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.’

¹⁸The 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 ¹⁹and asked them, ‘Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?’ ²⁰His parents answered, ‘We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but 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.’ ²²His 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. ²³Therefore his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’

²⁴So 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.’ ²⁵He answered, ‘I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’ ²⁶They said to him, ‘What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?’ ²⁷He 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?’ ²⁸Then they reviled him, saying, ‘You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.’ ³⁰The man answered, ‘Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’ ³⁴They answered him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?’ And they drove him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ ³⁶He answered, ‘And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.’ ³⁷Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.’ ³⁸He said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshipped him. ³⁹Jesus 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.’ ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him,

‘Surely we are not blind, are we?’⁴¹ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, “We see”, your sin remains.

“Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” “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 confesses Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.” “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, 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.” “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see... 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.” “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.”

We may think this reading is about sin or about miracles, or signs as John describes them, or parents who leave their child to fend for himself. Or maybe about mud or saliva or a pool called Siloam. But it's not. In fact, although chapters separate them, this story is a continuation of our story from last week, about the Samaritan woman at the well. “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” “He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” she asked. Jesus and the woman meet; Jesus and the man meet. Through each of their encounters they come to know Jesus better. She says, “He told me everything I have ever done.” He says, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.” She says to Jesus, “I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” He says to Jesus, “And who is [the Son of Man], sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” Jesus says to them both, “the one speaking with you is he.” So that those who do not see may see.

People who did not believe encounter Jesus and come to know him and God through him, this man and this woman and the townspeople of the woman. Others who believed in God cannot see Jesus for the Messiah, the Son of Man, that he is. “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” What does an encounter with Christ do to us? Are we more convinced, more convicted? Or do we shy away? While it may not be the case for every pastor, I can tell you I have yet to meet and share call stories with one who did not look for a way

out of the calling before gradually accepting it. I'm not saying that they didn't believe in Jesus - although I know a pastor who went to seminary to decide if God was real or not - they may have been believers in the *idea* of Jesus. But could Jesus really want them? Could Jesus really provide for them and their families? Is this promise of Jesus' **enough**? Like Jonah, are we prepared for, willing to accept, willing to be part of the consequences of sharing God's good news? Prepared for, willing to accept, willing to welcome of the consequences of God's good news on us, on our lives?

"I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." We know we don't want to be the ones becoming blind. We want to see. We want to acknowledge Christ as our Lord and Savior. We want to see how the reign of God is already here, even while acknowledging that it is not yet complete. But sometimes, sometimes the good news of God, of Christ, doesn't match the way we want to see the good news, to share the good news, to live the good news. Would Jesus love that person? That means I should love that person? What would Jesus do? That means I should do that, too?

The reading this morning is a snapshot, a moment in time. We cannot know if the blind man's parents eventually gave credit to Jesus, worshipped Jesus, overcoming their fear for the sake of what was right. What of those Pharisees who believed – did they influence, convince, their friends to believe also? "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." What does it mean that those who do see may become blind? It is not a punishment, in the same way that those who are rich becoming poor is not a punishment. If, in my life, I have become one who thinks I can see, who thinks I get it all, who thinks I understand the whole of the gospel, then I wish to become blind to the understanding I have constructed in order to receive the sight Jesus offers. If I have become rich in stuff, then I am likely poor in what matters. I want to lose my grasp on the things which get in the way of my receiving that which is not stuff.

Horace Mann, an American reformer of education, once said that "Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery."¹ I am misusing Mann's intent but indeed education, knowledge, in Christ and through Christ, is the greatest of equalizers. Jesus came to be the great equalizer. That all might be and behave as equally created as God intended, that all might know God and God's love – those who do not know come to understand and those who think they understand come to **really** know. "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." When Jesus makes his judgment, assesses the situation, gets a read on you, will he find that you do not see or that you see? In either case, will you be open to whatever he has to offer? Will you hear and

¹ http://www.tncrimlaw.com/civil_bible/horace_mann.htm

comprehend when he says, “The one who is speaking to you is he, the Son of Man, the Messiah”? This is our Easter hope, is it not? So may it be for you and for me.

Let us pray: Lord, open our eyes and ears to that which you have to show us. Amen.