Who Sinned, This Man, His Parents, or the Pharisees?  
3/1/2020

Blindness is a terrible thing;  
I don’t think any of us would argue with that.

We take in  
about 70% of our data about the world through our eyes.  
How many of you have had  
some form of eye surgery to improve or save your vision?  
What would have happened  
if you had not had a medical intervention?

Now, how many of you all would CHOOSE to be blind?  
Crazy question, right?  
But that is exactly what today’s story  
from the gospel of John is about.

Turn with me to John 9.  
I’m going to ask all of you to do  
a lot of imagining this morning,  
putting yourself in the place of people in the story…  
Can you do that?

First of all, what’s the problem?  
Read- (John 9:1)  
As he went 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?”  

Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus,  
“but this happened so that the  
work of God might be displayed in his life.  
As long as it is day,  
we must do the work of him who sent me.  
Night is coming, when no one can work.  
While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”
The disciples see the blind man as a theological problem, not as a hurting human being.

1. Why is there suffering in the world?
2. What about- (name your favorite tough case.)

Jesus says, “you’re looking at this wrong, guys. There IS pain the world, and yes, sin caused it, but don’t look to blame. Be part of the solution.”

4 “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me.”

(And what is the solution? Not a what, but who.)

5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

6 Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes.

7 “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent).

So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

1. What if the man got offended that Jesus put spit and mud on his eyes?
2. What if he thought going to the pool of Siloam was too far, or too inconvenient?
3. What if, what if… But the man went, and he washed, and he came home seeing.

Wait… STOP… He did WHAT? Had he EVER seen before? What would that experience have been like for this man?

Close YOUR eyes.

1. Now - remember the last thing you saw.
2. WHAT IF that was the last thing you ever saw?
3. Did you take that view for granted?
4. How are you going to feel when you open your eyes?
All those sounds, now have sources, and shapes. All those tastes also have color and visual appeal.

Had he seen Jesus? No, not yet. So who do you thank?

If it had been you, what would you have done next, after getting your sight, not BACK, but for the first time?

So what are aftershocks?

8 His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?”

9 Some claimed that he was. Others said, “No, he only looks like him.” But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”

“How then were your eyes opened?” they demanded.

11 He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.”

12 “Where is this man?” they asked him. “I don’t know,” he said.

(If the story had ended there, I might have felt better, but then it takes a decidedly sour turn.)

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.

(Now why did they have to do that? Cognitive dissonance- Healing good, making mud, bad. What are we to believe?)

14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath.
Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” So they were divided.

Finally they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

First the blind man received physical sight. Now we see him developing spiritual sight, which ultimately is far more important. He was open to “go wash,” and now he is willing to look at the evidence and think it through. Some others, sad to say, were not so open.

The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents. “Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

“We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind.”

But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.”
22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.
23 That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind.
   “Give glory to God,” they said.
   “We know this man is a sinner.”
25 He replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”
26 Then they asked him,
   “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”
27 He answered,
   “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”

28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses!
29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”
30 The man answered,
   “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.
31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will.
32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.
33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”
To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.

Wow, don’t you love their spirit of open inquiry, Their willingness to look at the facts of the case?

But before we judge them, when do we do exactly the same thing, jumping to conclusions without working through the implications of reality and our take on theology?

What a sad conclusion to the story… only that’s NOT the “end of story.” Aren’t you glad?

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him…

In order for Jesus to “find” him, what did Jesus need to be doing first?

1. Jesus was looking for this man.
2. Jesus was seeking the one lost lamb, the one who was expendable to the Pharisees, so that they could maintain the purity of their convictions.
3. Sometimes blindness is preferable to seeing truth.

And when he found him, he said, “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 now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.
Worship- to see God for who He really is,
and to see ourselves for who we really are,
and to acknowledge the difference
with respect, honor and awe.

The story is STILL not done.

39 Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world,
so that the blind will see
and those who see will become blind.”

40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this
and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

41 Jesus said, “If you were blind,
you would not be guilty of sin;
but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

Those who THINK they can see spiritually
are proven to be blind,
while the man who starts the story
blind on so many levels,
gains both physical AND spiritual sight.

Some take-aways-
1. Be careful of what you are so confident that you KNOW,
that you are not willing to look at the data again,
in light of what God has so clearly done in front of us.
Maybe their understanding of Sabbath
needed some revision,
rather than condemning and rejecting
the work of God in their midst.

2. Have the courage to own your healing,
in all its simplicity and contradictions.

3. Receiving 20/20 vision may come with
some potential social consequences.
   - Friends might withdraw from us.
   - Family may think we’re nuts.
- We may have to buck tradition,  
  and that’s never welcomed.
4. Instead of focusing on who to blame,  
  this man or his parents,
  - Let’s solve the problem.
  - Let’s show compassion.
  - Let’s move from abstract arguing  
  to practical problem-solving.
  a. How did this person lose their job?  
b. How did this girl become pregnant?  
c. Why didn’t you save more for retirement?  
d. Why didn’t you replace your roof earlier?  
e. These illegal aliens shouldn’t even be here.
  Can you help? Then help.
  Let’s let God sort out all the  
  “woulda shoulda couldas.”
That COULD have been us “born blind,”  
or in the projects, or fleeing a war-torn country, or or or…
1. Can you help?  
2. Can you show compassion?  
3. Can WE be the way that God’s glory  
  gets shown in the world today?

Who sinned? Wrong question-  
How can I help? RIGHT Question.

4 As long as it is day,  
  we must do the work of him who sent me (us).  
  Night is coming, when no one can work.

5 While (we are) in the world,  
  as the body of Christ in the world today,  
  we are the light of the world.”  
  “Let your light so shine before men…”  
  (Matt. 5:16)  
  “Jesus, Open the eyes of my heart, Lord”