

## **Blindsided by Blame**

**April 3, 2011**

### **Scripture: John 9:1-41 Lent 4A**

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9:1 As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

9:2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

9:3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.

9:4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

9:6 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,

9:7 saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

9:8 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?"

9:9 Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."

9:10 But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

9:11 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."

9:12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

9:13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

9:14 Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.

9:15 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."

9:16 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.

9:17 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."

9:18 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

9:19 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

9:20 His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

9:21 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."

9:22 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.

9:23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

9:24 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."

9:25 He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

9:26 They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

9:27 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?"

9:28 Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.

9:29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

9:30 The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.

9:31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.

9:32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.  
9:33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."  
9:34 They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.  
9:35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"  
9:36 He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."  
9:37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."  
9:38 He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.  
9:39 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."  
9:40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?"  
9:41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

### **Proclamation of the Word**

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Who sinned this man or his parents? Why does it always come back to whose fault is this? Who can we blame?

The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade child makes a D on a math test. He comes home long-faced and afraid of the consequences that await him. Then the conversation begins....

Parent: Did you not study? Did your teacher not teach this well enough, long enough? Why did you not tell me you were having trouble in math?

Little Boy: Well, Bobby Joe Simpson always keeps me from paying attention. He is always making funny noises and cracking us up.

Mom to Teacher: What did I miss? Did you know he was struggling?

Whose fault is it?

OR

The doctor sits down with the couple who cannot conceive and are weary of trying for the nth time to have a baby. She sees the tension in both and the weariness on their faces.

The Doctor knows what they are thinking:

Are the Doctors doing everything they can?

Are we too stressed? Is there something in the environment?

Is it me? Is it her? Is it him?

The doctor opens her file as the couple holds their breath. They are wondering whose fault it is that they cannot have a baby they so desperately desire?

Or the concerned widower looks at his medical bills with dread. He is overwhelmed with the stack of bills sitting in front of him and wondering how to negotiate the discrepancy with the doctor's office and the insurance company. He's been on the phone with both for hours.

How did this get to be so complicated?

Isn't it enough that I have to undergo chemo for my cancer?

Who has made the care for his health so hard? Is it the medicare? the supplemental insurer? the doctors?

The legislators who make the laws?

How did we get in such a mess?

Whose fault is it???

He just turns and walks away to lie down and rest, his eyes are drowsy. He feels nauseated, literally.

The Disciples see the man born blind along the road and asks Jesus, whose fault is it that this man was born blind?

Disciples are product of their culture. They are curious. This is a logical question for in their day sickness was believed to be a result of sin. That was the assumption. And we all rationalize based on our assumptions. Maybe it is a coping mechanism when something makes no sense. We want to lay the blame at someone's feet. Someone has to be responsible. If we cannot find someone to blame, God is usually the target.

But I think the disciples are just being curious. After all they are learners. And how does learning happen? One asks questions, discovers, and understands. And Jesus is their teacher.

Jesus tells them that the man was born blind so that God's works might be brought to light.

This is about God and not the disciples or even the blind man.

*Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him 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."*

REVELATION of God. This is ultimately about JESUS's identity as the son of God.

The man born blind sees, but the neighbors, parents and Pharisees will ask the same thing, "How did this happen? Whose fault is it? This does not make sense. But this sign is not about who did what and how. **It is about Jesus.** The disciples ask about the man and the cause of his blindness. Jesus redirects them to see that it is about what God does.

It takes two verses for the blind man to be healed. The other 39 verses are all those witnesses trying to blame, rationalize, hold responsible and even punish someone for what happened.

It just doesn't make sense a man born blind covered in mud and washed in the pool called Siloam, or SENT, can now see.

It doesn't add up. The Pharisees think this Jesus must be a sinner to heal on the Sabbath. The man's parents must be held responsible. They say, "Go ask our son. He's an adult." They have too much to risk to get involved. They are all scratching their heads.

The once blind man isn't even sure what has happened, but slowly his eyes are opened even after his sight is restored. He recognizes the Son of God, Jesus, but the rest are left in the dark, blinded to the light of Christ, God's revelation in the Son. **It is all about Jesus.**

Ann Weems is a poet, writer of faith. She confesses that growing up in Nashville, TN with a Presbyterian father minister, they didn't have Lent. But she went to church on Palm Sunday. They got out of School on Good Friday and everyone went to church downtown and heard the last words of Jesus as he was dying on the cross. She wasn't real sure what it was all about, but she knew this. It was all about Jesus. We want to make it about us. But the blind man who didn't ask to be healed reminds us that God will do works within us and sometimes in spite of us. It is about Jesus.

She reflects in her poem,

*It was also about Jesus when my father was tried by the  
church for heresy.  
He had preached sermons about racial inequality,*

*and higher wages for the poor, and loving people of other faiths,  
as well as preaching a sermon on peace just before World War II.  
Some people told him to stick to the Bible.  
My father said he was preaching the gospel,  
And his conscience would only allow him  
To preach the truth as he saw it.  
As he heard it.  
As he felt the Spirit.  
It was about Jesus.<sup>1</sup>*

Sometimes it is when confronted, that we discover what has happened and what we believe. IT is sometimes in the aftermath that our faith becomes more defined. For the Blind man, it took lots of questions and interactions.

*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.*

And with a new song in his heart I can almost hear him sing, "I was lost but now am found, blind but now I see."

As he told his story, he realized who Jesus was. And he confessed and worshipped him. Jesus tries to enlighten those around him to see that God was at work in these things.

Jesus wanted them to see that he came to bring light in the darkness.

He was working on God's behalf.

Then Jesus scoops up dirt and mixes it into mud just like the Creator did when he form Adam out of dust and water, shaping and forming.

The man who was in the dark was washed in a pool called SENT- healed, eyes opened, so he could go and tell the story, give witness to God's work in his life, and share his new perspective. The blind man didn't mean to be healed, but it happened that way.

When Jesus comes into your life and gives makes us see the world with new eyes. We are transformed. We may not have even intended it. We are like the blind man, understanding more clearly, over time, what this all means. He says, *I once was lost and now I'm found was blind but now I see.*

Many of us become Christians or were raised Christians. And over time we learn what that means as we are asked or have to respond. When confronted, we have to sort out what we believe and why. This is what I loved about my college experience. I was confronted with people who practiced their faith in different ways, I had to really sort out what I believed and why. When we have an experience with Jesus, and we have to sort it out. All the man knew was that he washed in a pool called SENT after Jesus touched his eyes and now he can see!

Washed in the waters of Baptism, we are claimed by Christ, called God's own child. But we are also SENT like the blind man to witness to what God can do and has done!

You might be sent to minister in the work of the Free medical Clinic as some here are. Your eyes have been opened to the needs for health among our vulnerable neighbors. And as your serve you discover that you have met Christ in the hurting stranger.

You might be sent to serve by being the care-giver of a family member who is sick or disabled because you have seen and understand that person's need and your ability to respond. Maybe you didn't sign up for the task, but here you are. And your eyes become opened, God works in that experience, and your faith is challenged and strengthened.

You might be asked to join a Disciple Bible Study, serve in a ministry, or on a team at church. You never really got involved before. And then you discover that by following in faith, Jesus gets to you and becomes real because you are serving Him and following him.

You have been washed and SENT to tell others what has happened and where you have seen transformation.

It is in the telling, being engaged and the sorting out that we discover who God is, sometimes.

Then we give witness to what happening so that God's works might be revealed, sight given.

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I am found, was blind but now I see.*

And the God who created light out of darkness,  
humanity out of mud,  
and gives sight the blind can transform even lumps of clay like you and me,  
not just for our sakes, but so sight may be given to the blind  
and all may know  
**that it is about Jesus!!!**

Laura Smith Conrad, Fort Hill Presbyterian Church

<sup>1</sup>Ann Weems, "Jesus, God's Beloved Son" from *Advent's Alleluia to Easter Morning Light* (Westminster John Knox: Louisville) 2010.