

St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church

2368 Eggert Road Tonawanda, N.Y.

The Blind See!

John 9:1-13

04/02/11

Rev. Fr. Edward Kusmierczyk

Let us pray: Father open our eyes with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so that we can see and inwardly digest the truth of your Word that can only be found in Your Son Jesus Christ. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in sight O Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Today's gospel lesson deals with a theme of blindness. But it's a blindness that is not only a physical blindness of vision, but it's about a more important blindness and that is a spiritual blindness. The physical blindness is found with the man who was born blind and the spiritual blindness is on the part of the Pharisees. With the Pharisees it was their willful unbelief of what had taken place between Jesus and the blind man. It was their unbelief of setting false standards. And along with that was their need to acquire more for proof of what had taken place. You see, a physical defect of blindness like the man in today's Gospel lesson can be healed, but religious people who have the defect of spiritual blindness resist healing. It's like the Pharisees who because of their unbelief have rejected the facts and have remained in spiritual darkness.

I think there are four things that highlight the blind man's healing. First is **the problem**. And the problem is what precipitated the healing. And the problem is found in verse one. **"As He passed by (meaning Jesus) He saw a man blind from birth."** Second is **the purpose**. And what was the purpose for the man being born blind? And the purpose is found in verses 2-5, **"And His disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind? Jesus answered, it was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."**

Third is **the power**. And that is healing power can only be found in Jesus Christ. We read in verses 6-7, **"When He said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing."** The fourth highlight of this healing is **the perplexity**. It's the perplexity that is found in the people who saw the healing. Verses 8-13, **"Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a**

beggar, were saying, 'Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?' Others were saying, 'No, but he is like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the one.' So they were saying to him, 'How then were your eyes opened?' He answered, 'The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash; so I went away and washed, and I received sight.' They said to him, 'Where is He?' He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind."

What I find interesting about today's reading is how quickly the Disciples seem to be acting more like the Pharisees than followers of Christ. They made the same assumption like most other Jews of that time period did. And that was the assumption that a man's sin was primarily, if not exclusively, the cause of all pain and suffering in his life. So as with the blind man, they have assumed that he has committed some grievous sin and therefore that's the reason for him being born blind.

Or on the other hand, perhaps they rationalize in their own minds that his blindness is not due to his sin, but perhaps his parents have committed some serious sin against God. And therefore God has punished the parents by allowing their son to be born blind. But the problem with that type of thinking is that Jesus made it very clear that it was for neither of those reasons. Instead it was for the sole purpose of God. And that purpose was to reveal and display His mighty healing works as could only be found in Jesus Christ. All though Jesus did not deny the general connection between sin and suffering, He did refute the idea that personal acts of sin were the direct cause for all illness.

I think a perfect example of that can be found in chapters one and two of Job. There we can see how God's sovereignty and His purposes played a part in the life of Job. Job suffered not because of any wrong doing on his part, but because God was contesting with Satan. Listen to **1st. Peter 5:8-9, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to destroy. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."** You see, Satan asserted that true believers are only faithful as long as they prosper. He claims that if their prosperity, health or well being is taken away or interrupted they will reject God.

Satan wanted to prove that salvation is not permanent, that saving faith can be broken and those who were God's could become followers Satan's because of their circumstances. So God allowed Satan to test Job's faith by attacking all that he has. And it's with God's sovereign permission that Satan was allowed to torment Job. But Job never knew that, nor did his friends who were praying for him. So they all struggled to explain suffering from the perspective of their ignorance of the situation.

So what the book of Job shows us is that bad things do happen to good people. And that no one can judge a person's spirituality by the painful circumstances they may be encountering at the time. So as with Job, the believer who is in the midst of suffering should not abandon God.

Now those are words that are easy to say and believe when all is going well. But what happens when sickness enters the picture or loss of a job or death of a loved one. Then those words of, 'not abandoning God in difficult times', seem to have a hollow ring and become a little harder to accept. I think we all ask the questions of why me, why not so and so, they're not Christians, why should I have to bear this suffering and pain? I am sure that we all have had those thoughts at one time or another. But listen to **Mathew 5:45, "For God causes His sun to rise and shine on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."** What we have to remember is that God is sovereign and righteous.

Yet for some people in this present life, they have difficulties and suffering. They live in a world that they believe that God is for whatever reason punishing them for something they may have done in the past. It's the same way of thinking that the disciples had understood when they encountered the blind man. It was ingrained in the culture as being commonly understood that people who had sinned would have some tragedy or illness occur in their life. And this was looked upon as God's way of punishing people for their sin. So we shouldn't be surprised to hear Jesus' disciples say, **"Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind."** Everybody is thinking negatively about the blind man except Jesus. Listen again to what He says about the blind man, **"It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."**

Yet some people have this idea that God is just sitting around in heaven with this large rubber mallet in his hand waiting for us to make some sort of mistake so that He can pounce on us with His Holy hammer. Do you know what I am talking about? Let me try to give you a visual picture in your mind's eye. It's kind of like the game you see at the Erie County fair where these little animals pop up from a hole in the table and you're standing there with a large mallet in your hand ready to wack that little creature from here to eternity. That's not God! God is not sitting around waiting to punish individuals or the world at large. In fact in spite of everything we do in this world whether good or bad, God shows His love and pours out His blessings on us in spite of our selves. In fact it could be argued that we do not deserve His blessings, affection or love. But how does God's Holy Word respond to us? Listen to Psalm 103:10-11, from the Living Bible, **"He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins, for His mercy toward those who fear and honor Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth."**

Yet as I said earlier, for some people the presence of difficulty and suffering are a sign that God is punishing them. Let me give you an example of what I mean. There is a story told about a young man who volunteered to read to a college student by the name of John who was blind. He asked John how he lost his sight. He told him that it happened because of a chemical explosion at the age of thirteen. He also asked him how he felt. John responded with, 'Life was over, I felt helpless and I hated God.' For six months he did nothing to improve his lot in life. He would eat all his meals alone in his room.

Then one day his father said to him, 'John, winter's coming and the storm windows need to be up, and that's your job. I want those hung by the time I get back this evening or else!' Then he turned, walked out of the room and slammed the door. I got so angry. I thought who does he think I am? I'm blind! I was so angry I decided to do it. I felt my way to the garage, found the windows, located the necessary tools; found the ladder, all the while muttering under my breath, **"I'll show him. I'll fall and then he will have a blind and paralyzed son!"** John continued, **"I got the windows up. And I found out later that my father was never more than four or five feet away from my side."** In the same way, Jesus did not promise to spare us from difficulties and suffering, but he did promise to be with us, **Matthew 28:20, "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

I think you would all agree that we live in a fallen and sick world. It's a world full of not only physical blindness, but more importantly spiritual blindness. It's a world that is living in moral relativism. There are no absolutes as to what is right or wrong. Society is living like the blind man who sees only his present situation and is living in despair without hope. So the question for us is, **"Will we see only the present circumstances and allow ourselves to sink into despair?"** Or will we live in hope of a new day and put our trust in the only one who can save us, Jesus Christ! You see scripture is very clear that without Jesus we are all like the blind man in this lesson and we need the healing touch of Jesus. Jesus said, **"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."** (John 16:33)

Amen