

SERMON FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 22 “Seeing a Person, Not a Problem”.

Dear fellow redeemed, Have you ever noticed how John, in his gospel, takes us into small personal encounters with Jesus?

Rather than give us an overview of Jesus’ ministry, listing regions and various kinds of healing, John takes us into the heart of Jesus’ work, asking us to meditate on how He interacts with people: Jesus and Nicodemus, Jesus and the Samaritan woman, and now today, it is Jesus and the man born blind.

In these small intimate moments, John offers us a vision of how God works, personally, individually, incarnationally, then and now in the world.

The story begins simply. **“As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth.”** Jesus sees a man. I would like you to stop and think about how profound this is. Jesus sees a man.

Sometimes, it is so hard for us to see a person. We see things not people. We see the Rolex watch but fail to see the broken marriage. We see the nose ring but completely miss the lifetime of childhood abuse. We see the tattoo, but we don’t know the story behind it. We see things but do we really see people?

It is hard for us to see a person through Jesus’ eyes. When the disciples see this man, what do they see? They see a problem, not a person.

Listen to what they say to Jesus: **“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”**

For the disciples, the blind man is a teaching moment; in effect, reducing him to a theological dilemma. So, they stand at a distance from a person, observing the man, but not seeing him.

Talking ***about him but not with him***. They do not see him. They do not speak to him. They do not touch him. They do not put shoes on his feet or a piece of bread in his lap. They do not grasp his hand and lead him to Jesus. They stand apart from the world and talk theology with their teacher.

But Jesus... Jesus does something different. Jesus sees the man. And Jesus sees this man as part of a greater story.

The disciples view of God was a story of sin and punishment from God. This man was blind, and someone had sinned. Either he did or his parents and God punished the sin with blindness.

Jesus, however, sees this man as part of a much greater story, a story of creation and restoration. Jesus’ story does not begin with sin but with creation. It does not end with punishment but with restoration in Him.

When the story begins in creation and ends in restoration, all the moments in between are filled with the working of God. Our God who comes to take His broken creation and fashion it into a new creation. So, Jesus looks at this man and sees him as part of a greater story.

Jesus says to the disciples, **“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in his life.”**

Then Jesus stops talking theology and starts living it. He kneels on the ground and begins to create again. Just as when he created the first man, Adam, God gets dirty in order to create.

He spits and makes mud from the dust of the earth. Forming it. Fashioning it. Putting it on the man’s eyes. And then He speaks to him and tells him to go wash in the pool of Siloam.

This one who said, **“Before Abraham was, I Am,”** now shows just how far back He goes. The One, who was there at the original creation, has come into creation again and is going to work to bring His broken world back to restoration.

He will take this man and give him sight. That is His work. And He is willing to die to do such work. In fact, by dying He will do even greater things than the miracle witnessed that day.

Jesus did not come to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through Him. He will capture our sin, pay the wages of sin and through His death and resurrection, He will create new life. Life for this man. Life for you.

What a blessing for Jesus to reveal Himself like this today. How easy it is to reduce God’s story to sin and punishment; to see problems, not people.

But Jesus comes today and gives us a glimpse of a much greater story. Baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, you are children of God.

You are dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ. You are not slaves to sin but children of God, servants of His righteousness. Jesus opens the door of His Father’s Kingdom and gives us a glimpse of His greater work.

He teaches us to live, not by the littleness of our minds (talking about people) but by the greatness of His Kingdom, working with people, **“that the works of God might be displayed.”** **PAUSE** In today’s lesson Jesus gives us a warning that we do well to heed. He says, **“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”**

While everyone else is fighting over the blind man – the disciples want to know why, and the Pharisees are upset that Jesus had done this miracle on the Sabbath – **the blind man teaches us about faith.**

Faith that doesn't ask why, but trusts. Faith that hears the Word of God and keeps it.

Faith that receives the gift of God without any merit or worthiness in me, and relies on the mercy of our Savior.

For Faith is focused on the only thing that matters – **the grace and mercy of Jesus.**

So it appears we can learn a thing or two about **seeing** from this **blind man!** About seeing Jesus aright. You see, the God who created everything from nothing in the beginning, is still creating from nothing – now in the person of Jesus.

Just as He reached down in the beginning and formed Adam from the dust of the ground, He reaches down this day and forms eyeballs from the dust of the ground to give to this man.

And as he washes at Jesus' command in the pool of Siloam, he is given both physical and spiritual sight.

And which is the greater miracle? Both are creations out of nothing. The man born blind *and* born dead in his trespasses and sins, now sees his Savior and clings to him by faith. **“Lord, I believe”** he confesses at the end, **and he worshiped Jesus.**

And so, it seems, it is not a bad thing to be blind around Jesus! For to the blind He gives sight, and forgiveness to the sin-filled, and life to the dead.

Which is why at the beginning of every service here, we confess that apart from Christ we have no good in us.

We cry out for mercy, and our Savior has more than enough mercy. Giving us sight and life in the forgiveness of our sins. Raising us again, and restoring us as His children.

For that is what our Lord has come to do. Restore our vision so that we might fix our eyes on Jesus, and say **“I believe.”**

For He is the light that has come into our darkness. The light to enlighten our dark and sinful hearts and minds, that we might **walk as children of light.** ***But what does that mean?***

To walk as children of light. Doing good? Certainly. To see our neighbor – even our enemy! – in need, and to help them. Yes.

To have the same mercy and compassion on them that Christ has on us, yes, indeed.

For what have we deserved from God? Yet what have we received? And so yes, to walk as children of light is to walk in love. Striving always to do what is best for the other, no matter how hard, no matter the cost.

But even more, to walk as children of light is to walk in faith. For you cannot live the life you have not first received.

And so, it is to receive – **and continue to receive** – the light and life of God, given us in Christ Jesus, through the death and resurrection that atoned for all our sins.

For He died for we who were dead in our trespasses and lives so that we may live. That we may live as we are washed in His baptismal waters, and faith is created out of nothing.

That we may live as we continue to be washed in His forgiveness every day – every day the old sinner in us drowned, and the new man raised to life.

That we may live as we eat His nourishing body and blood, His forgiveness enlivening us, strengthening us, and sustaining us. That we may live and with every breath of our lives say:

In triumph or tragedy, I believe. In wealth or in want, I believe. In struggle or in times of stillness and peace, I believe. In sickness or in health, I believe. I believe my God is gracious and merciful and good. Not sometimes, but always. **PAUSE**

At the beginning of his Gospel, John told us that the darkness tried to overcome the light, but could not.

Today's lesson illustrates that truth. And it may seem as if the darkness is overcoming the light in your life – by forces from without, and by the struggles of sin within.

But still, the darkness cannot win. Still Corona Virus and any other form of pestilence cannot win.

Still, nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus, not even death.

For your triumphant Savior has taken **you** into His nail-pierced hands, and will lead you through the valley of this dark and sinful world, and into the unending Easter of Heaven.

You may not know the “whys”, you may not know the “hows”, but you cling **to His promise.**

His promise of life, which is as sure and true as His empty tomb. For in Him, that is the future of your tomb as well. When the darkness of death is shattered by the light of the glory of Heaven, once and for all.

Until then, He is working.

Making folks blind to themselves and their goodness, so that He may give sight. Humbling, that He may exalt. Slaying, that He may give life.

So, rejoice when that happens to you! That we may learn to walk by faith and receive all these gifts. Seeing ourselves and our Savior rightly. Fixing our eyes on Jesus and crying out, **“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” Amen.**