

What do you see?

John 9:1-41

April 3, 2011

Scene 1

Worship leader: *As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been born blind.*

Disciple 1: *Rabbi, whose sin caused his blindness?*

Disciple 2: *Was it his own sin or his parents' sin?*

Jesus: *His blindness has nothing to do with sin, not his or his parents'. He is blind so that God's power can be seen at work in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of the One who sent me, because the night is coming when no one can work. While I am here in the world, I am the light for the world.*

(Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud, and rubs it on the man's eyes.)

Jesus: *Go and wash your face in the Pool of Siloam.*

Neighbor 1: *Isn't that the man who used to sit here and beg?*

Neighbor 2: *Yes, he is!*

Neighbor 1: *No, he isn't. He just looks like him.*

Man: *I am the man!*

Neighbor 2: *How is it that you can see now?*

Man: *The man called Jesus made some mud, rubbed it on my eyes, and told me to go to Siloam and wash my face. So I went, and as soon as I washed, I could see!*

Neighbor 1: *Where is he?*

Man: *I don't know.*

What did they see?

What did Jesus' disciples see? When they looked at the blind man sitting and begging at the side of the road, what did they see?

Sin! They saw sin! Somebody's sin, either his or his parents' -- this was somebody's fault!

The disciples looked at the man and saw blindness, disability, affliction. And they saw it as a sign of God's judgment. And since the judgment is God's, there is nothing to be done, nothing to offer the man, except perhaps pity.

What do you see?

What do you see when you walk past a blind man, a crippled woman, a beggar, an alcoholic, when you see a victim of a flood or tornado or earthquake? Do you see someone unfortunate? Someone to be pitied? Or someone to be loved? And if not by you, the one who sees, then by whom?

What did Jesus see?

A man. Jesus saw a man, who happened to be blind. He saw the man, not just the affliction. He saw a man who may be set free, healed by the power of God. Jesus saw an opportunity for ministry, an opportunity to do the work God sent him to do.

And as for his disciples' question about sin? Jesus' response could not be clearer!

His blindness has nothing to do with sin.

Jesus puts to rest forever any notion that blindness or cancer or ALS or a hurricane in New Orleans or an earthquake in Haiti or a tsunami in Japan has anything to do with God's judgment.

What do you see? When you see suffering, calamity, disaster, do you see evidence of the awful power of God's judgment? Or do you see opportunity for the awesome power of God's healing love?

What did the neighbors see?

They had no idea what they were seeing! Isn't that the man? Yes, it is. No, it isn't. Well, he kind of looks like the man ...

The power of God to work wonders, the power of God to do wonderful and good things in the lives of their neighbors, was made plain, right in front of their faces, but they didn't know what to make of it. Why not? Because they didn't expect anything so wonderful and so good to happen in the lives of their neighbors or their own?

In any case, they were baffled, at a loss, and they did the only thing they could think of doing. They took the man to the Pharisees, to the people who should know.

Scene 2

Worship leader: *Then they took the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees. The day that Jesus made the mud and cured the man of his blindness happened to be a Sabbath.*

Pharisee 1: *How is it that you can see?*

Man: *He put some mud on my eyes, I washed my face, and now I can see.*

Pharisee 2: *The man who did this cannot be from God! He doesn't obey the Sabbath law!*

Pharisee 3: *How could a sinner do such a wonderful thing?*

Pharisee 1: *You say he cured you of your blindness. Well. what do you say about him?*

Man: *He is a prophet.*

Worship leader: *The Jewish authorities were not willing to believe that this man had been blind and could now see. So they called for his parents to appear.*

Pharisee 1: *Is this your son?*

Father: *Yes.*

Pharisee 1: *Was he born blind?*

Mother: *Yes.*

Pharisee 1: *So, you say he was born blind. How is it, then, that he can now see?*

Father: *We know he is our son, and we know he has been blind since the day he was born. But we don't know how it is that he can see and we don't know who cured him.*

Mother: *Ask him! He is old enough! He can answer for himself!*

(Parents leave.)

Pharisee 1: *Promise before God you will tell the truth!*

Pharisee 2: *We know that this man who "cured" you is a sinner!*

Man: *I don't know if he is a sinner or not. I only know one thing: I was blind and now I can see.*

Pharisee 2: *What did he do to you?*

Pharisee 3: *How did he cure you of your blindness?*

Man: *I have already told you, but you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Maybe you, too, would like to be his disciples?*

Pharisee 2: *You are that man's disciple, but we are Moses' disciples! We know that God spoke to Moses, but this man ... We have no idea where he comes from!*

Man: *What a strange thing that is! You don't know where he comes from, but he cured me of my blindness! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners. God listens to people who honor him and who do what he wants them to do. Since the beginning of the world, nobody has ever heard of anyone giving sight to a person born blind. This man wouldn't be able to do a thing unless he came from God.*

Pharisee 2: *You were born and brought up in sin ...*

Pharisee 1: *And you are trying to lecture us! Throw him out of the synagogue!*

What did the Pharisees see?

They had no idea, either, what they were seeing, but they were supposed to have the answers, so they scrambled to come up with something to say. They did know the Law, and the fact that this supposed healing took place on the Sabbath settled at least one thing in their minds.

The man who did this cannot be from God! He doesn't obey the Sabbath law!

What a strange thing to say! What a strange thing to think -- that it must surely displease God for anyone to lift a finger to help a neighbor ... on a Sabbath!

At first, the Pharisees even doubted whether the healing took place at all. They suspected the whole story was a ruse or a fabrication, so they called the man's parents in to testify.

What did the parents see?

Who knows? Who knows? They were too afraid to say! They were afraid of being lumped in with the rest of the Jesus-sympathizers and expelled from the synagogue, so they said, "We know nothing!"

What a strange thing! At a moment that should have been one of the happiest of their lives -- when their congenitally blind son can see! -- any joy was entirely overshadowed by fear, and they could think only of themselves.

And at a moment when their son needed their support, their backing, more than ever, they abandoned him. Which, perhaps, had become habit for them. After all, he had been sitting alone and begging by the roadside, hadn't he?

What do you see?

Or will you have to calculate the risks and weigh the possible consequences to your reputation and social standing before you will say what you see?

What did the Pharisees see?

The parents' testimony at least confirmed that something had happened. The man was born blind. So they kept pushing and pushing the man to tell them how.

How did he cure you?

They had already decided this could not possibly be from God, so they sought some other explanation, any other explanation. Magic? Witchcraft? Devilry?

What a strange thing!

What a strange thing that is!, the man said. You don't know where he comes from, but he cured me of my blindness!

You are willing to entertain every possibility ... except the obvious one! Who do you suppose is the source of every good gift, the source of any wondrous blessing? The extraordinary irony was that the only one who could see was the man born blind!

What do you see?

Do you see the power of God still at work in the lives of your neighbors and in your own lives? Do you see signs of the ongoing ministry of Jesus: healing diseases, freeing people from their addictions, setting people free from the debilitating power of guilt and shame, curing people of apathy and selfishness, curing people of hopelessness? Or will you believe first any other possible explanation for what you do see?

Scene 3

Worship leader: *When Jesus heard what had happened, he came and found the man.*

Jesus: *Do you believe in the Son of Man?*

Man: *Tell me who he is, sir, so I can believe in him!*

Jesus: *You have already seen him. He is the one talking with you now.*

Man: *I believe!*

Jesus: *I came to this world, so the blind should see and those who see should become blind.*

Pharisee 1: *Surely you don't mean that we are blind, too?*

Jesus: *If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty. But since you claim you can see, it means you are guilty.*

What did the man see?

Once his eyes were opened, what did the man born blind see? He saw Jesus!
He saw Jesus ... and believed.

What do you see?