

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Two Types of Blindness

Lesson: John 9:1-11

9 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 After saying 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. 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." 10 "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. 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."

The eyes are crucial to our daily lives as they allow us to perceive the world around us, avoid obstacles, and gather information through reading or watching videos. Moreover, our eyes provide us with the ability to appreciate nature's beauty and see the faces of our loved ones. Therefore, they are one of the most valuable parts of our body. Sadly, some people are born without sight or lose it due to certain conditions or circumstances.

Today's reading in the Gospel of John describes two types of blindness, one being physical. The man who was born blind and mentioned in the reading corresponds to this case. By examining the question posed by the disciples in verse 2, we can understand how people during that time perceived and accepted diseases, disabilities, and misfortunes.

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (2)

This passage helps us understand that people during that time viewed disabilities as a consequence of sin.

Despite the blind man not committing any ethical wrongdoing, people during that time would have associated his blindness with being a punishment for sin from God. As a result, they would have shunned him

and kept him at arm's length. It would have been difficult for him to find employment, which would have naturally led to his poverty. Consequently, he would have sat alone against a wall on the street, begging as people walked by.

Although the blind man was facing numerous difficulties due to his impaired vision, what distressed him, even more, was the societal discrimination that deemed his blindness a divine punishment for sin.

In response to this, Jesus clearly declares, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned" (3), which would have undoubtedly brought comfort to the blind man. Yet, Jesus goes beyond mere consolation and reveals that there is a divine purpose behind the man's blindness.

In essence, Jesus' disciples and all the people who heard Jesus' teachings, stood before the blind man, arguing about whose sin caused him to be born blind. These questions not only failed to provide comfort or solace to the blind man, but also caused him great emotional distress. Meanwhile, Jesus approached the blind man, gave him comfort, and miraculously healed his sight in both eyes.

Jesus first spit on the ground and made mud, and then put it on the man's eyes. The people around Jesus would have watched with earnest attention as Jesus performed the healing. Then Jesus declared: "Go. Wash in the Pool of Siloam." (7)

As described in the Bible, Siloam means "Sent." After receiving help from someone, the blind man would have made his way to the pool of Siloam and followed Jesus' instruction to wash his eyes. And just like that, his vision was restored, completely transforming his life.

Many people witnessed this miracle with their own eyes, but despite that, they struggled to believe and accept it. In fact, their reactions after witnessing this miracle were doubt, disagreement, and confusion.

Verses 8-9 say: “His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” Some claimed that he was. Others said, “No, he only looks like him.””

People also brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, questioning whether he was truly born blind, how he had been healed, what Jesus had done to him, who Jesus was, and whether it was lawful for Jesus to heal him on the Sabbath. In short, Jerusalem was in a state of confusion.

Friends, isn’t the healing of the blind man a truly remarkable and grateful miracle? Despite witnessing it firsthand, many people could not bring themselves to believe that Jesus was the Son of God. They were doubtful and even accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath law by performing the miracle on that day.

Earlier, I mentioned that there are two types of blindness described in this story: physical blindness, which was healed by Jesus, and spiritual blindness, which refers to those who cannot see or hear the cries of those in pain and instead cause their hearts to be troubled.

During that time, many people could not recognize Jesus as the Son of God and Christ, and as a result, when they witnessed Jesus healing a blind man, they were unable to fully understand the significance of the miracle and refused to believe it. Despite seeing the healing miracle with their own eyes, they doubted both the blind man and Jesus, and accused them of being sinners. Everyone denied Jesus, except for one person who could not deny the truth. That person was the blind man who received comfort and healing from Jesus. When questioned about Jesus being a sinner, he replied: “Whether Jesus is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see.” (25)

Friends, those who have directly received grace and love from Jesus can never deny God or Jesus. Some may ask, “Show us God and prove God’s existence,” and those who have left the church may say, “I have

not seen Christ in the church.” According to the statistics, it seems that many churches are declining. However, this does not mean that the church is becoming unnecessary in this world. Rather, it means that the work of the church is even more necessary in this world. Since God is beyond our comprehension, we cannot fully understand or prove God’s existence to others. Nevertheless, we can demonstrate God’s love to those in need, just as Jesus comforted and healed the blind man.

I think that all of us, including myself, have experienced God’s love and grace which is why we have chosen to follow the path of Jesus’ disciples. We were once spiritually blind, but God sent Jesus to us and we put our faith in him, and as a result, we have been given spiritual sight. Now it’s our turn to share that love with others who are in need.

Today is UMCOR Sunday, which stands for United Methodist Committee on Relief. While many of us are fortunate enough to live in peace and safety with the aid of our country’s military, police, firefighters, and EMTs, there are others in the world who face daily challenges due to natural disasters and wars. Recently, numerous people have been affected by the earthquake in Syria and Turkey, as well as the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. UMCOR is actively working to provide prompt assistance to those in need across the global through their relief efforts. Your contributions and donations given in the UMCOR envelope today will go directly towards supporting disaster victims in Syria and Turkey.

Let us remember that as Christians and disciples of Jesus, we are called to serve and help those in need not only through organizations like UMCOR but also in our own local communities. So, let us reflect on how we can make a positive impact in the lives of those around us.

As I conclude this message, I invite you to watch two prepared videos, introducing the work of UMCOR.