

Sunday, March 2nd, 2008
The 4th Sunday in Lent

John 9:1-41
Are We Blind?

To hear this story, we really have to start at the end. We have to hear the Pharisees ask, “Are we blind?” and know that we should be asking that same question.

The Pharisees have seen this entire story unfold before their eyes. They have heard of a man who had been born blind who could now see. They could not believe that such a thing could happen. They gather the man in, they gather his parents in, and they interrogate him. And after all of that, after everything they should have heard and seen and that they should know, they refuse to listen to the man born blind. They are convinced they know what God is about and what God is doing and what God will or will not do. Quite often, so are we. Quite often, so are the disciples.

As Jesus and the disciples are walking along, they see a man born blind. The disciples reveal their human and mortal focus with their first question, which is, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?”

Take a moment to think about that. While it is certainly true that what parents do impacts their children’s lives, do we believe that God would intentionally blind a child because of what his or her parents had done? Likewise, what could the child have done to deserve being born blind? And more than all of that, what does it say that those disciples believed that God could or would do such a thing as punishment?

Jesus answers the disciples with a clear and clean answer, an unusual thing that they don’t often get from him. He clearly and concisely disabuses them of their notions that this is punishment. This man was born blind in order that the glory of God should be revealed. Not the power of God, not the wrath of God, but the glory of God.

And how is the glory of God revealed? It is not revealed by punishing the disciples crazy or stupid enough to ask that question. It is not revealed by Jesus appearing to condemn the Pharisees who do not comprehend that this is the man born blind. The glory of God is revealed in this passage through the healing of a man. The healing of one single man. Not the healing of the world. Not yet. The glory of God is revealed in one single act. One small act, one act that leads us all to ask, are we blind?

So, for us, what is it that we are blind about? Without a doubt we are blind, as blind as the Pharisees. For we too, expect God to be a certain way, to do things in a certain fashion, and to be worshipped and served by a certain type of people. The church is currently asking itself about who gets to serve God in ordained office. This is about the 4th time we’ve had this conversation – seminary education in the colonies or Europe, seminary education at all, or whether or not women can serve. Are we blind to who God might be calling to serve, having

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read the stories in the Bible about all of the folks that God calls to serve in spite of themselves? Who does the calling to service, God or us?

Or are we blind about what it means to be a successful church? Does such a thing have to be large and financial prosperous? Does it have to have 1,000 people? Do they have to be young? (Whatever “young” is.) Or, once again, are we, the church, supposed to be the people that God calls to be in this place, regardless of number or demographics?

Are we blind because of what we have been, because of what we ‘know,’ to what God is doing in our very midst? Are we, like the Pharisees, unable to see that the man was born blind, not for punishment, but for revelation? Are we blind? Or do we begin to see that the glory of God is revealed one person at a time, one action at a time, with a man born blind, 12 disciples from Galilee, you, me and the next person to come through those doors...