

February 11, 2018 Rev. Debra Schneider
John 9:1-41 Reflections Healing of the Man Born Blind

GOSPEL 1

John 9:1-12

REFLECTION 1

I Am the Man

The disciples ask Jesus, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Or, more plainly, "What did he, or his parents do to deserve this?" Behind this question is this certainty, "For we know... that bad things don't happen to good people!" It can be a convenient assumption. It might allow us to simply pass by those who are suffering without a moment's compassion, consideration, or care. If people are simply getting what they deserve, then surely we have no responsibility, no call on our conscience, or urge to care for those suffering ones who sit on the margins of our families, our churches, our communities, or our world.

The man in our story has been sidelined, not so much by his blindness, as by the community's assertion that he doesn't deserve any better. He's a sinner, or his parents are sinners... it doesn't matter. He doesn't matter. Then Jesus comes along and sees him. His disciples follow his gaze and ask, "Who is the blame?" And he says no one, and that's not the point anyway.

Then he takes a little mud and a little spit, rubs it on the man's eyes, and tells him to go to the pool nearby and wash.... simply go and wash. And there is a transformation. There is a transfiguration.

In this story from John given us for this transfiguration Sunday, it is not Jesus who is transfigured before the eyes of Peter, James, and John; rather, the blind man before the eyes of the whole community. In fact, he was so changed that people who had passed him by day after day couldn't agree that it was him!

Somewhere in the midst of their argument, he became something more than a poor sinner and an object lesson for passers by. Suddenly, to everyone's shock, he found his own voice. In the midst of their argument, he said loud and clear, "I am the man."

Years later, when he would tell the story to his children and his grandchildren about the things that had transpired on that day, he would say:

Then, I was transfigured.

Everything changed.

It was a revelation.

A new dawn.

Light, for the first time.

But not just light,

I saw colour, beautiful colour.

.... everything changed

SUNG RESPONSE *Behold the Face of Christ* **MV 114**



Behold the Face of Christ.
O Jesus Christ, O Living Christ,
You rise among your people.

GOSPEL 2

John 9:13-23

REFLECTION 2 *He is a Prophet!*

Franciscan Priest and writer, Richard Rohr argues that the enemy of faith is not doubt, rather, certainty." Our certainties can blind us to what is right in front of our eyes! And so it is that we hear the Pharisees say of Jesus with conviction: "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath."

For his part, the man born blind speaks his own truth, plain and simple. When questioned, he says, "Jesus took mud, put it on my eyes, then I washed, now I see."

When the Pharisees will not accept or believe the man's truth--when they question him further about Jesus, he calls him a prophet. They call on his parents to verify that he was ever blind in the first place--which they do, and nothing more. This wondrous good news who is standing before them in the person of their son seeing them for the first time is greeted, not with hallelujahs, but with fear and anxiety about their standing in the community!

The Pharisees, are certain that neither the man standing before them, nor Jesus himself are good, and convinced that no good can come from either of them.

But what I love most about this story is the way in which the man born blind finds his voice. As we move through the story his confidence grows. He no longer sits silently on the sidelines, as an object of other people's debate. He is in the midst of the fray, he is speaking his own truth, he is saying, "Black Lives Matter!" He is moving from strength to strength.

He isn't alone. In the @me too movement, it looks as if we are in the midst of yet another a potential culture shift. Women are finding their voices, stepping out of the shadows, refusing to be silenced, speaking their truths, and refusing to accept the blame, shame, victimization, and powerlessness so many have experienced and continue to experience at the hands of men in positions of power.

In recent decades, those of us who have been around for awhile, have watched as the marginalization and victimization of one group after another has been brought into the light. It is as if one set of bandages after another is being ripped from our collective eyes, and we are being forced to acknowledge, time and time again the full humanity of those who have been left begging for mercy, begging to be seen, begging to be given their rightful place in the human family.

We know the names given to those with dark skin and kinky hair, to those with a slant to their eyes, or turbans or hijabs on their heads. We know the names given those who fall in love with those of their own gender, or experience their physical gender as somehow wrongly assigned. We know the names given to aboriginal peoples of lands that have been, 'civilized' and 'savaged' by settler populations.

We know what those names mean for them, in terms of opportunity, of dignity, and respect.

And then there is this story, and we imagine the voice of Jesus saying, "It's not their fault."... there is no fault at all in these things. And telling us that there is still the possibility of healing, wholeness, and joy here. There is another and better way forward. He says, "Go, wash the mud from your eyes, and see. See the beauty of God's good creation all around you. Witness the beauty within the diverse humanity that is before you. Say, "hallelujah!" "

We have a choice. We can stand firmly entrenched in our certainties: "God does not heal on the Sabbath!" "This man cannot be from God. " Or we can open our eyes and be astonished and grateful.



Behold the Face of Christ.
O Jesus Christ, O Living Christ,
You rise among your people.

GOSPEL *John 9:24-34*

REFLECTION 3 *I Was Blind, Now I See!*

Then, I was transfigured. Everything changed.
It was a revelation. A new dawn.
Light, for the first time.
But not just light,
I saw colour,
beautiful colour.
.... everything changed

This is Transfiguration Sunday. The usual passage for this day is the story of Peter, James and John climbing a mountain with Jesus and seeing him shining with the light of God, and in conversation with Moses and Elijah.

The gift of the Narrative Lectionary to us is in their offering of this alternative Transfiguration passage about the healing of the man born blind; because reading this story on this day opens the possibility that transfiguration isn't just about Jesus-- that we too might find ourselves for a brief and shining moment, transfigured in the light and love of God—that we might find our lives resonating with the long spiritual tradition of which we are a part, and prepared to re-commit our lives to loving and serving others in Jesus' name.

In such moments it is best not to be walking alone—but in the company of a those who will walk with us as we struggle to understand what it means to live into the fresh light we have been given—as we work to find our feet and our voices, and to declare, “I am the one!”

In this beautiful sanctuary, in the presence of the living Christ, and in the presence of one another, we are blessed to be able to wonder at such a possibility. We are blessed to be able to let go of our certainty that such things do not happen.



Behold the Face of Christ.
O Jesus Christ, O Living Christ,
You rise among your people.