



4 LENT

MARCH 30, 2014

I SAMUEL 16:1-13; PSALM 23; EPHESIANS 5:8-14; JOHN 9:1-41

Here's Mud In Your Eye!

FIRST LUTHERAN, MARSHALL

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Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.

In just a moment you will begin to hear the story of the blind man who is healed when Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud, smears it on the man's eyes, and sends him off to wash in the Pool of Siloam. That simple, singular, significant sign also sends this man off on an epic journey of transformation.

He moves from being *unseeing* and *unseen*; to *seeing* and *being seen*; to *seeing...and*, ultimately, *believing!* This amazing experience gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, *Here's mud in your eye!*

Let's meet this man who starts out in the story as *un-seeing* and *un-seen*...
[Read 9:1-12]

The *un-seeing* man in our gospel story was *un-seen* – **not** because he'd been *shut away* from the public eye – quite the opposite. You see, his blindness was *seen* by everyone...as a sign of **sin** – *his own* or that of his *parents*.

Even the **disciples** see it that way – and we're almost half-way through the Gospel of John! They've been with Jesus for many months, they've seen him do some amazing things...but they're unable to see Jesus' view of how God is, quite literally, *dying* to relate with people...They're a lot like...you and me!

The belief of the day was that folks who suffered were **sinner**s being **punished** by **God!** Because of that mindset, the man was **un-seen** by **everyone** as a person, a neighbor, a child beloved by God... He **was**, in a very real sense, the original *invisible man*.

I remember a conversation I had with an elderly woman who was also *un-seeing* and who certainly felt *un-seen*...by her family. She had moved into a multi-level care **facility** because she couldn't live alone in her own home anymore.

Obviously no one saw her blindness as a result of some **sin** – but she did feel like many people never saw her as a person, a neighbor, a child beloved by God. She said that she felt like an **invisible** woman...

Well, into the life of our nameless blind man steps Jesus. After chatting with the disciples about the man's perceived sin – and **without** being **asked** – the Lord says to the guy, ***Here's mud in your eye!*** and sends him off to wash in the pool of Siloam.

Lo and behold, a miracle occurs – and it touches off a **firestorm** of controversy. Let's listen to how this man's fifteen minutes of fame will unfold now that he is ***Seeing and being seen...***[[Read 9:13-23](#)]

This formerly **unseeing** man can now **see** – and the **fact** that he ***can*** is noticed by **everyone!!** The trouble is, that **still no one** sees him ***as a person***, a **neighbor**, a **child** beloved by **God**. Even when the Pharisees finally talk to the man directly, they're **more** focused on ***what happened***, than on what happened...***to this fellow human being!*** Certainly people **see** him – but **only** because the **miracle** has made him...a **spectacle!**

The 1973 movie entitled Awakenings is based on the true story of a doctor working in a New York hospital with catatonic patients. One day he makes an amazing discovery.

L-Dopa, a drug used to treat patients suffering from Parkinson's disease, causes one of his patients to wake-up! It's a miracle – the guy can walk, talk, see, speak: in **short**, he can **live** again...

...but the hospital keeps the patient on a very short leash. Certainly the staff sees him as a **person**...but they see him primarily as a ***person of interest*** – to the medical profession.

As it turns **out**, their concern is **warranted**: the drug soon loses its ability to help – and **unlike** our friend in the **Gospel** story, the **patient** eventually slips back into his **unseeing condition**, ***falls*** again into a catatonic state...**never** to **return**. It is a very **sad** end to **his** fifteen minutes of fame.

Though the results are much more **favorable** for the formerly **blind** man, the **negative reaction** to the man who *healed* him threatens to pull everything apart at the seams.

The Pharisees even drag the man's **parents** into this conundrum of *seeing and being seen*. And his poor folks don't know what to do. They almost act as if their son has gotten himself into **trouble** by getting himself **healed**. Dutifully they verify that their son who was born blind can now see, but **they** don't want to be seen as trouble-makers. They work very hard to be **invisible, unseeing, blind** to the reaction this act of healing has caused.

Thanks be to God our story doesn't end here. Listen to what happens now as this man who can **see**, *also* discovers what it means to believe. *Seeing...and believing!* [Read 9: 24-41]

What a change has occurred in this man's life! This poor **blind** man has, at best been **ignored** and at worst, **pre-judged** as a **sinner**. You recall how the Pharisees yell at him: *you were born entirely in sins!* (v. 34).

Now this man is **both** able to see...and to see!! **He sees** who is **speaking** to him, *and* he sees **why** they are **upset**. Says the one who now sees to those who are spiritually blind: *Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where (this healer) comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.* ³¹*We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will...* ³²*Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.* ³³*If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.*

Now, the **most important** part of the entire story takes place in the **next few verses**. The Pharisees have *had it up to here* and **drive** the man out of their presence. **What happens next?**

-Jesus *finds* him...

Jesus **finds** him! Like the **shepherd** leaving the 99 to look for the **one lost sheep**, or the **woman** tearing apart her house looking for that **one lost coin**, **Jesus** seeks out this man who **does not know** the **Lord**, does **not** even know **himself**. But when the once blind man is **found** by **Jesus**, he is **finally** able to **see** – with eyes and heart – and *say, I see, and I believe.*

Stephen King's novel, The Stand, begins with world-changing accident at some secret research facility. A mistake turns loose a killer virus that wipes out 98% of humanity across the globe.

In the aftermath of such destruction, the few people who survive start to find each other. As it turns out, they're being drawn toward one of two places. Mother Abigail, an elderly black woman, is chosen by God to spiritually summon all the people who see with both their hearts and their eyes. Another power summons all those who delight in the blindness of sin.

One young man who senses Mother Abigail's invitation, shows up at her door and supports her opposition to the evil at work in the world. But he wants her to know that he can't really accept the notion that God at work in what's going on...not sure if he even believes in God. At that point Mother Abigail walks over to the young man, gives him a big hug and says, ***God bless ya, Nick, but it don't matter – he believes in you!***

Isn't that the truth in Jesus' actions with the man born blind? I'm fairly certain the Lord encountered many blind people in his years of ministry. But look at the journey of this one man: from being ***unseeing and unseen***; to ***seeing and being seen***; to ***seeing...and believing***, and further, to help others **see and believe**.

And isn't that the truth in Jesus' action with you and me? I'm fairly certain that the Lord has encountered many people like us, blinded to God's goodness by the power of sin. But look at our journey – where we've been and where we are; who we've been and whose we are.

Jesus calls each of us from being unseeing and unseen, to seeing and being seen, to seeing and believing... And though we may not always see God at work in the events of our lives, and though we may not be the best at believing in God's promises, in the end, as Mother Abigail said, it don't matter, for God believes in you!

This amazing truth is revealed for us all in those immortal words from the song Amazing Grace: *I once was lost but now am found; was blind but now I see*. In conclusion, there's only thing I can think of to say...*Here's mud in your eye!* Amen.