

Fourth Sunday of Lent - Lectionary: 31

"You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

That's how people treated infirmities during Jesus' time. Born crippled? Someone sinned that caused this. Born blind? Same thing. Their handicap was not normal. It was a curse from God.

Today's Gospel theme is of sin and forgiveness; darkness and the light. At the surface, one would say this Gospel is another account of a miracle that Jesus performs, only to be ridiculed by the Pharisees for performing it on the Sabbath. On the surface, it can be read that way. But as we know, there is a deeper meaning here.

The story of the man born blind is only included in the Gospel of John. You'd think this is a major event would be in all four, but only John recounts it. John's Gospel is a more deeply theological account of the life of Jesus. The Gospel of John was the last of the four. The other three were "synoptic" or told in a chronological fashion. That was their purpose. Their purpose was one of historical accounting. John's Gospel was a purposeful *theological* account to showcase the **salvation** theology of the Lord. This Gospel account is written with a deeper purpose. And that purpose is one of teaching the early Christians not "*who*" Jesus was, but "*why*" Jesus was. It was written at a time when the Christian people were fully devoid from the Jewish community and the author intended to show Christ as *the* one and only Savior, the Logos, the Truth. We need to understand this as we read the Gospel of John. We are jumping into the "deep end" of the Gospel pool today.

Back to our Gospel story today. A man who was blind by birth is happened upon by the disciples. The disciples, by their teachings of the temple, determine his infirmity was a curse of some sort, either by his parents or perhaps the man himself. They figured God cursed this man for a reason. And it was a sin of some sort. But Jesus immediately corrects them. He states that the man "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him." He goes on and further states, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Blind and sight. Darkness and light.

We are often blinded by sin. When we sin, we turn ourselves from the ways of God. We no longer "see" God as the result of our sins, and in some cases, mortal sins, we can no longer approach His table until we are freed of these sins. Free of the darkness in order to see the light of the Lord once again. We begin to see the idea in this Gospel account about sin and blindness or darkness and whose sin? Not only that but that the sin or darkness can only be removed by God's grace, and in our case, the power of the sacrament of Reconciliation. By that sacramental miracle, we see once again.

Let us proceed further. The man is taken before the Pharisees, who interrogate the man upon how he regained his sight. The Pharisees do not believe this man claimed to be born blind, *and* that if indeed this Jesus

performed some sort of sorcery was not from God because it was done on the Sabbath; the day on which no work was to take place, according to Jewish law. Instead of seeing the miraculous account, they tore it apart. THEY were blinded by their laws. They could not see the light, or the truth. And because of their blindness they could never accept the possibility that this Jesus was the Savior they have been waiting for. Now that is blindness! Instead of seeing the beauty, the glory and the goodness, they instead view it as against the law and therefore, BAD! They did not see the light of God, in His people, things, or circumstances as they are seen through the Lord, but as *they*, the Pharisees, wanted them to be. The man replied to the Pharisees inquiries, "Do you want to become his disciples, too?" They ridiculed him and said, "You are that man's disciple; we are disciples of Moses!" How apropos is this passage! Until our eyes are opened by Christ, our sight is really just a projection of ourselves onto the world. Somewhat like the Pharisees did. But, with the light of Christ, we see things as **He** would see them.

Finally, the Pharisees throw the man out of the temple. Remember, if you were blind, you were considered sinful and therefore banned from the Temple. Once the man regained sight, technically, he could regain access to the Temple, but the leaders of the Temple reject him and throw him out. Sometimes, when we speak of the light of Christ in our lives, we are also rejected by those who do not believe; who are in the dark, right? This also lends to the historical background of John's Gospel writing, as during that time, the Christians were being rejected and martyred for their belief in Jesus as "the light", the savior of the world. And when the man was thrown out of the Temple what happened? Jesus found the man. Why did Jesus seek out the man he cured? He didn't have to. He already cured him. I think He did this to give purpose to the man. Instead of questioning the rest of his days, the blind man learned that it was a gift of returned sight by **the Son of God**. That he didn't need to follow the old law of the temple, but the Lord's new law of salvation for all. That is why we read that the man then worshipped Him. God never leaves us. We are His children and He gathers us all in. Like the blind man. Like the early Christians. Like us.

That's a lot to unpack, isn't it? But that is the theological beauty of this Gospel account. I ask you to read this Gospel account a couple more times over the next week and meditate on it. May its "light" of truth help you to see the way to the Lord in your life. Let us see the Lord's light and become His disciples. Then we can help others to see the light as well. May God bless you all.