Jesus leads the blind man to faith, asking if he believes in the Son of Man and explaining that he is the Son of Man. The blind man believed in Jesus and worshiped him. Jesus then says something really interesting, that he came into the world “for judgment... that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” That seems to contradict John 3:17, which we read two weeks ago, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn [judge] the world, but to save the world through him.” So how do we understand the difference? Why did Jesus come?

Jesus did, in fact, come to save, but in order for someone to be saved, they must believe and obey. So when the truth about Jesus is proclaimed, it is met received with faith in some people, but with rebellion by others. The proclamation of the truth is then, both the source of salvation and of judgment. You simply cannot have one without the other. In order to save our sin, our sin must be revealed. But for those who will not admit their sin, which is revealed in the message about Jesus, there can be no grace. In revealing himself to the blind man, Jesus evoked faith in the blind man but rebellion in the religious leaders.

Jesus illustrates that in his conversation with the Pharisees. They ask him if he thinks they are blind and he says, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.” Jesus brings the light of truth to the Pharisees and they reject it. But in rejecting it, they claim to see. Their exposure to the light—the truth—and their subsequent rejection of it, means that they have brought judgment on themselves.

Conclusions

One, Jesus is the light of the world and by trusting in him, we receive our spiritual sight (2Corinthians 4:3-6). In 2Corinthians 4:2 and 4, Paul says, “We do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God... 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” This is simply another way to describe being born again, which we talked about just a couple of weeks ago. When we hear the message about Jesus, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and we either reject that conviction, or we own it and accept it and turn to Jesus to have our sins forgiven. And by believing in him and confessing our sins, we are saved.

Two, Jesus is the light of the world and by rejecting him, we stand under God’s judgment (1John 5:12). 1John 5:12 quite simply says, “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” God will not allow us to be undecided about Jesus. We don’t get to decide that we don’t want to decide what to do about Jesus. Jesus himself said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).” When someone claims to be the way and truth and life, you have to make a decision about that claim.

Three, bad things still happen and we don’t always know why, but we can be sure that God wants to use those bad things to reveal Jesus to the world (John 9:3). We live in a world that has been broken by sin. Sin has broken our physical world, including the earth and our bodies. Sin has broken our minds. It has broken our hearts. It has broken our relationship. In the midst of all of this brokenness, bad things happen. Wars cause devastation. Droughts lead to starvation. Earthquakes level buildings. Viruses create a black market for toilet paper. It’s okay to wonder why these things happen, but we should always allow Jesus to redirect our thinking to the big picture issue of how does God want to redeem this brokenness by using it to reveal his son, Jesus? That is the question that will allow our hearts and minds to be aligned with God’s and help us to prepare to be used by him to see Jesus revealed to those around us.

Postscript

On that note, let me just provide some practical ways you can prepare yourself to be used by God to reveal Jesus in this crazy time. One, let me encourage you to be vigilant about maintaining your times of abiding. Jesus says that if we remain in him and he remains in us and his words remain in us that we will produce much fruit and it will be fruit that will last (John 15:5). However, he also says that apart from him, we can do nothing. I encourage you to keep up with our Scripture read- ings together. Keep up your times of prayer. Spend some time in worship. If you want God to use you, you need to have something to give. And just remember this: people don’t need what you have to give; they need what God wants to give through you, and that can’t happen if you’re not abiding in him.

Two, find a way to meet a need that you can meet and start by meeting the needs of your family, both your genetic family and your spiritual family. In Galatians 6:10, Paul says, “as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” So how do you do good? Let me give you a simple way. Look at all of the “each other” passages in the New Testament and do those things. Pray for each other (James 5:16). Prayer allows us to help someone in almost countless ways without violating their social space. Love each other (John 13:34). That could take numerous different forms, but whatever it looks like, we can love each other. Serve each other in love (Galatians 5:13). Maybe that’s getting groceries for someone who can’t or shouldn’t get out. Or getting a prescription for them. Carry each other’s burdens (Galatians 6:2). We have more ways to connect to people than ever before in history. If someone’s on your heart, call or text them. Don’t just pray for them, pray with them. Do good to your spiritual family.

Three, watch for opportunities to demonstrate the love of Jesus in all of your interactions. Care for those who are weak or poor or struggling because God is tuned in to their suffering and we should be too. Psalm 34:18 says, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” In Isaiah 58:6-7, God says, “6s not this the fast that I choose...?to share your bread with the hungry... and bring the homeles poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?” There is no better time than now for us as the people of God to reveal the love of God and the power of faith in Christ to a world in chaos. Why is that? Because no matter what happens, we have a hope that transcends this life and transcends death. Because of that hope, we can live and sing and say it is well with my soul.
Lent 2020
March 22, 2020
Pastor Jared Stoner

Lent # 4

This is the fourth week in our Lenten series. We’re working our way through a list of daily Scripture readings together as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I appreciate David Godbout filling in last week and not leaving me a mess to clean up. This week we’re going to consider John 9:1-13, and 28-41. Before we jump into the text, let’s pray.

Healing of the Man Born Blind (vv 1-7)

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ‘As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’” Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go to Siloam and wash.” He went and washed and came back seeing. Verses 8-13 continue the story.

The Inquisition (vv 8-13)

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” “So they said to him, ‘Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” Then the Pharisees asked him, “Who are you?” He said, “I do not know.” “They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

Have you ever had the experience of seeing someone outside the normal place you’re used to seeing them and it throws you off? The blind man’s neighbors experienced the same thing, but it wasn’t just because he was in a different place, but because the man they were looking at could see and they had only ever seen him blind. He wasn’t groping about to be helped, but walking around like anyone else. The result was that they were not sure whether he was the man or not in spite of the fact that he was standing right there telling them that he was the man!

If the man before them was the man who had been blind, they wanted to know how he received his sight. So the blind man began doing what he would do throughout this whole story—he testified that Jesus had healed him in very simple terms what happened: Jesus made mud, put it on his eyes, told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam, and he could see again. Then they wanted to know where Jesus was as though this man were Jesus’ handler or parent. So now the whole thing is going to be referred to management. They took him to the Pharisees where he would have to answer the very same questions all over again.

The short story of his meeting with the Pharisees was that they couldn’t agree on what to think about Jesus because he had healed the man on the Sabbath. While the oral tradition of the Jews allowed work to be done to save a person’s life, it didn’t allow work to be done to save a person’s situation. It’s a situation of life-threatening. Several parts of what Jesus did broke that tradition, things such as kneading (of bread or mud) and anointing the man’s eyes. Finally, the man’s parents were brought in to identify their son. When asked questions they knew the Pharisees didn’t want to like the answer to, the parents referred them back to the man. The result was that they wore thin. In fact, it wore so thin that he got snarky and asked them: “Do you want to become his disciples, too?” Verses 28-34 pick up the story.

From the Mouths of Blind Men (vv 28-34)

And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.” “How can God have spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes.” “We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.” Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. “If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” “They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

The Pharisees didn’t respond well to being schooled by a blind man. They accuse him of being Jesus’ disciple but, point out, that they follow Moses. Here, in essence, is the difficulty between Jesus and Christianity: the man is pitted against Jesus and his teaching. The blind man again gets snarky. He points out that for the religious leaders to be unaware of someone as powerful as Jesus is really “amazing.” In other words, for people who were supposed to be in the know about religious matters, they missed possibly one of the biggest ones! Surely they would know about someone powerful enough to heal a blind man.

If that weren’t enough, the blind man tells the religious leaders that God does not listen to sinners and that if Jesus is healing people who were born blind, God must be listening to him. It’s one thing to fake a guy to fake blindness, stroll into temple, and pretend to be healed. It’s another alto- together to heal a man that everyone knows beyond a shadow of a doubt was blind. This brings to mind Paul’s comment in 1 Corinthians 4:20: “the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power.” That was enough for the Pharisees to kick him out of the synagogue. We’ll conclude with verses 35-41.

Jesus Reveals Himself (vv 35-41)

Jesus said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him and it is he who is speaking to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

And we finish with the words of the blind man: “If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”“They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?’ And they cast him out.”