



“Dirt and Sight”

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Scripture (NRSV):

John 9:1-41

1 As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, 7 saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. 8 The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." 10 But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." 12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. 17 So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." 18 The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight 19 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His

parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." 25 He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

Sermon:

We are in the throes of a pandemic, and you just know it is gonna happen, if you haven't seen or heard it already.

Religious "leaders" (in quotes) will begin to blame and shame. This pandemic is caused by the...fill in the blank...the gays, the rich, the poor, the Chinese, the meat eaters, the industrialists, the sinners (whoever they are)...just go ahead and find someone to vilify.

The man born blind: is he to blame? Is it his parents? Whose sins caused this calamity? Who can we blame?

"No one" says Jesus. Rather, "See this? This is an opportunity to see the love of God in action! Watch and rejoice, as this man born blind, receives his sight!"

And instead of rejoicing, comes the Inquisition!

Questions and more questions, panic and confusion and finger pointing!

Gee, that feels familiar!

Here we are in the middle of a societal seismic shift, and some folks just can't stop finger pointing, or hoarding toilet paper, or on the other extreme, going out partying, clubbing and coffee-ing while we have all been asked to do otherwise: share resources, keep social distance, shelter in place, help the vulnerable near you.

Some, always some, who are angry, selfish or discontented. They are blind.

I'm willing to admit that I have never been so attentive to my facebook pages, to my emails, to texts and phone messages. I've been listening to radio and blogs, I've been reading article after article online. My son, who works for the Spokane Regional Health District, updates us every day, multiple times a day, on local responses to Coronavirus. He scolds me and his father, about going out and exposing ourselves to risk.

How are you doing? Are you exhausted? Frightened? In an almost constant state of disruption?

Then, let's slow down!

I know, and I bet you do too...that for all the uproar, there are the moments of surprising joy. It sneaks up on you when you find crocuses in the grass, or hear the birds. It's there when you see the sun come up (or go down) in a glory of gold and pink.

It's there, with the neighbors out walking, the people singing in Manito Park. It's in a beautiful story or hysterically funny meme.

It is like the joy of the man born blind...while all around him is in uproar and confusion, he is looking around and seeing for the first time.

Our Conference Minister made this point forcefully to me earlier in the week, when he noticed his neighborhood with new eyes: his kid and the neighbor kids yelling over the fence, playing some new game only kids would understand in this time of social distancing. He noticed his neighbor who is in the medical profession as she got in her car and drove off to work, and he said a prayer for her. He noticed the elderly couple down the block, and that the entire neighborhood was checking in on them regularly.

Look around you, in this unsettled time, the era of Coronavirus, and see with new eyes.

I am astonished at the outpourings of love of humans for one another, and for the animals, too. I am humbled by the love and care of family and friends, far or near. I am inspired by music, impressed by excellent writing, in awe of the passionate science being done around the world to fight this thing, and I glory in the art and poetry that is pouring out of us all in this time!

We are feeling our interconnectedness, beyond all our nasty divisions. We are doing extraordinary things to help one another through this unique unsettling time.

As yet another article put it; we see how immature our consumerism and individualism are: we see how much we are together, we recognize how much we need each other, at last.

Look around you, and consider what you see: an opportunity for our God given compassion to shine. An opportunity for selflessness and sacrifice and service to shine forth for stranger, neighbor or friend.

Look around you in the midst of this unsettled time...as Jesus said, this is our chance to see the glory of God.

Since we cannot run around with our heads down, and our hearts closed...we finally see.

1. See dolphins in the canals of Venice.
2. See the sunlight and hear the birds in Wuhan.
3. See the neighbor whose name we never bothered to learn, and now we learn it.
4. See the grocery workers as the vital members of society that they are!
5. See the people sharing their toilet paper with the women's homeless shelter in Spokane!
6. See the people smiling and nodding to one another, the acts of kindness and caring...the bravery, the selflessness, the gentleness, the laughter even now.

May we be like the man born blind...Jesus told him to wash off the mud, and then he could see.

Let us wash off the mud! Let us see! For the glory of God is a human, fully alive!