

In Nomine Iesu

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity 2023

None is so blind as he who will not see – John 9:1-11

“As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 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 spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent). So, he went and washed and came back seeing. 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?’ Some said, ‘It is he.’ 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.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who came to open the eyes of the blind. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

The story before us this morning is a comedy in which everyone looks foolish, except the man born blind. The people who had seen him every day for years look foolish, because they can’t decide if he’s the same or not. Those who questioned him look foolish because they ask where the man went who healed him, when he never saw Jesus. The Pharisees look foolish, because they were so blind with rage that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath that they cannot see the obvious. The parents look foolish since they cannot bring themselves to speak the truth. The religious authorities look foolish, because they beg the blind man to solve their mystery and then, when he does solve it, they do not believe him. Instead, they punish him because he **sees all too clearly**. Everyone is a fool, except the man born blind **and the One** who gave him his sight.

I

The disciples saw the man blind from birth, and asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered in a way that seemed a little strange at first, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” His answer brings to mind what the prophet Isaiah said near the end of his prophecy: that Israel sought God but did not ask for Him. They found Him even though they were not searching for Him. He called to them as to children who were not part of His family. He welcomed them into His presence even as they busily tried to run away from Him. This morning let us consider these striking statements.

By nature, man is at enmity with the true God. This was true of Israelites as well. If an Israelite hadn’t been trained up in the way he should go, he would not have known God any more than a child brought up without such training in America today. This is true of humanity everywhere. That is not to say that people don’t seek God. People indeed do seek God, but they do not know who they are looking for. And they aren’t ready or willing to hear what God says to them. That is the enmity part.

Consider this: If we investigate all the religions of the world – and there are many! – we would **not** learn much about the nature of God, because the world’s religions all disagree with each other. They disagree about the number of gods, whether one or

many, the name or names of God or the gods, and where God or the gods can be found, what God or the gods can and cannot do. We won't learn much about God from a study of the world's many religions, but **we will learn much about mankind.** Man on every continent of the earth, in every age of history, among every race is and has always been constantly in search of God, constantly in search of peace of mind and peace of soul that he thinks will be his if only he can find God and be reconciled to him. In other words, every person has an emptiness within him or her that it seems only God can fill. But the problem is, where is God to be found?

Every religion provides a different answer to the question, and so, confusion reigns. This frustrates many, so that they give up on religion, and try to fill the emptiness in their souls with things not divine in character but of this world, from wealth and fame on the more culturally acceptable end of the spectrum to drugs and alcohol on the less respectable end, and everything in between. You will find many such people in every society and culture, whether it is predominantly atheist, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish or Christian. People search for God, do not find Him, give up, and go on to try to fill the void within themselves with things that dull the emptiness of their heart.

Where is God to be found? Consider carefully what Jesus gave **as the reason** for the man being blind from birth: "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."

II

Isaiah, speaking for God, said, "I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me." (v. 1) Dear friends in Christ, Israel did not seek and find God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of humanity on their own. No, **God found Israel**, and not just Israel in general. God came to individuals. God said, "Here I am, here I am," to one person after another. He said it first to Adam and Eve after the fall into sin, and then to many after. Now we see Jesus the promised Christ coming to the man born blind, calling on him to believe in the One who sent Him to Israel, the very One who promised: "I will lead the blind in a way they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground." (Isaiah 42:16)

Listen again carefully to what Jesus said to His own twelve about the man born blind: "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.**" Jesus was pointing them backward to what God had promised in the Old Testament through Isaiah. He promised to send into the world a Savior from sin and death. Here is what Isaiah had said would happen when the promised One, the Savior, appeared, "**In that day** the deaf shall hear the words of the book, and **out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.**" (Isaiah 29:18)

Later in the story some of the Pharisees would come to the blind man and say, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' **And there was a division among them.** Then this divided group would ask the blind man, 'What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes.' He said, 'He is a prophet.'" (John 9:16-17) You see, God was opening eyes even among others around the blind to that they were beginning to see, to hear, what the Old Testament Scriptures actually were saying.

After the man's parents were questioned, the religious authorities came to the once-blind man and said, "We know that God has 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 ... 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.**" (John 9:29-33) It is almost as if the blind man is seeing the very words of Isaiah: "Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance with the recompense of God.' He will come and save you. **Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.**" (Isaiah 35:4-6) The blind man gave them a very clear answer to their question. This one who opened my eyes is **from God!** Who could he be? You are the teachers of Israel. You tell me!

Jesus Himself later came to the man, and asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The blind man replied, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus replied, "You have **seen him**" – do you hear the powerful irony here? – "and it is he who is speaking to you." The man could only answer as he did, "Lord, I believe." Then Jesus replied with words that echo Isaiah, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." (John 9:35-39)

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Dear friends, go back to Jesus' words to His disciples, "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.**" Ask yourself a simple question. Has Jesus left us? Some denominations teach that. But that is **not** what Jesus taught. Just as many religious experts in Jesus' own day did not understand the Scriptures of the **Old Testament** – like those in the account of the man blind from birth! - many so-called experts today do not understand the Scriptures of the **New Testament**.

Jesus did not ascend into heaven from this earth to leave us. He will never leave us who are His by faith. Remember what God said **about the coming Savior** through Isaiah? "Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: 'I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you – You the Messiah! - **I will give you as a covenant** for the people, **a light for the nations**, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.'" (Isaiah 42:5-7) God promised He would give the Messiah **to the nations as their light**. What did Jesus promise? "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples **of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, **I am with you always, to the end of the age.**"

Dear friend, are you baptized into Christ? Do you hear His words of absolution as He forgives your sins? Do you hear Him say to you, "Take, eat, this is My body ... My blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Dear friends, open the eyes of your faith and see who it is who is speaking to you! It is the same One the blind man later saw and said, "Lord, I believe. **He is here!** He will never leave you. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria