

“Loyalty Brings Revelation,”

John 9:35-38, Sunday Lent 4-A, March 26, 2017

One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. His father stood on the ground below—with outstretched arms—calling out to his son: “Tommy jump, I’ll catch you!”

Tommy’s father knew that his son had to jump for his life to be saved! All the boy could see, however, was SMOKE and FLAMES and BLACKNESS! Understandably then, Tommy was afraid to jump off the roof! So he called out: “Dad, I can’t even see you!”

The father replied: “But I can see you, and that’s all that matters!”

The trouble with this man born blind—in our Gospel lesson is that he could not see Jesus. Like that father with respect to his son Tommy, Jesus could see the blind man but the blind man could not see Jesus. He could not see Jesus, even though Jesus was standing right there in front of him, looking down on him as he was begging for assistance. The blind man may have sensed that someone—was standing right there before him—but he didn’t have the foggiest idea that it was Jesus nor did he have any understanding at all about Jesus’ intentions towards him.

So here my friends, I hope is a good way for us to begin a meaningful discussion of our Gospel lesson today!

(1) Have you ever noticed—that in our human experience of life, you and I can never miss something that we have never really had?

Up to this point, this man who was blind from birth had no meaningful relationship with Jesus! Therefore, he could not miss the powerful blessing of having a relationship with Jesus that so many of us have! You can’t miss something that you have never had!

Think about it! Before electricity was wired into peoples’ homes, they never could have missed having electric lamps or a stove or a refrigerator!

Think about it! Before modern day plumbing, people certainly could not miss one of the greatest luxuries we all take for granted—of having a bathroom inside of our house!

Think of it! For so many of us growing up as children, especially as children growing up in the South, we never missed having air-conditioning in our homes—because we never had experienced such a wonderful thing! But once it was invented and installed into our homes, we knew for ourselves the deep truth, of which the psalmist confesses in Psalm 14:1: “Only the fool has said in his heart, there is no God!”

- Not only could this man not miss having a relationship with Jesus!
- Neither could he miss the ability of being able to see—you know—physical realities with his physical eyes!
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Had he lived with good eyesight for 30 or 40 years and then lost it as a result of an accident, or some such thing, we might have expected him to have been bemoaning his loss. But such was not the case!

How difficult it would have been for this man to sing—with any kind of depth or feeling, whatsoever, that wonderful hymn:

“For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the skies! For the love which from our birth, over and around us lies: Christ our Lord to you we raise, this our sacrifice of praise!

“For the wonder of each hour, of the day and of the night! Hill and vale and tree and flower; sun and moon and stars of light! Christ, our Lord to you we raise, this our sacrifice of praise” (LBW 561:1, 3)!

Therefore—how could this man, blind from birth, have properly valued the gift of being sighted—when he had never had the ability to see? **Besides, as far as this man believed—his condition was absolutely hopeless! There’s no way he could have begged for something that he had never had! This blind man was simply sitting there at the gate of the temple where he had sat for many years—because thousands of people passed through that gate into the temple—where he sat—holding his cup out—hoping to receive some assistance!**

Brothers and sisters—**isn’t this the way it for so many people living out their lives in the world today? They have never really come to enjoy a personal relationship of love and trust with that Man Jesus!?!**

The Bible teaches us that we are born into this world with a sinful nature; with a natural propensity to do evil! The Bible teaches us, that all of us, by nature are spiritually blind, dead and the enemies of God! But the good news is that God has sent his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ into our world to become for us the LIGHT OF THE WORLD, who through his perfect life, his death and glorious resurrection has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to life for us through the Gospel!

What a beautiful prophecy it is that our God makes towards the whole human race through the Prophet Isaiah in our Old Testament lesson today: *“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! These are the things I do and I do not forsake them” (Isaiah 42:16)!*

For those of us, who by the AMAZING GRACE OF GOD, have been baptized and who furthermore have been privileged to hear and believe the Gospel—St Paul speaks some very humbling words to us in our Epistle lesson from Ephesians 5:8-14 today: “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness but expose them! Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead! And Christ will shine on you!” -- Brothers and sisters, if it is true that we can never miss something that we have never had!

(2) It is equally true that it can sometimes be very difficult for us to keep in our possession—that with which—we have also now become entrusted!

Perhaps many people have never come to faith in Jesus Christ simply because they don’t really know—what it is that they are missing out on! It’s impossible for you and me to miss something that we have never had! But it is also VERY difficult for us, WHO ARE BELIEVERS, to allow the HOLY TRINITY—THE TRIUNE GOD—TO ALWAYS KEEP HIS PROPER FIRST PLACE IN OUR LIVES!

It's a powerful statement that Jesus makes to the Pharisees in the presence of that man who had been blind from birth, but whose eyesight was given to him for the first time by the divine power—Jesus had available to him as the Holy Son of God: *“For judgment I came into this world that those who do not see, may see and those who see may become blind”* (v. 39)!

The Pharisees, often times, were very well-intentioned people! They were very much in tune with what they believed was a proper understanding of the law of God—but so often in their chief desire to be faithful interpreters of God's law—they explained it so many different times, as they expounded upon it, that they in their misinterpretation of the law of God—ended up with something completely different altogether!

Rather than being happy for this poor man who had been blind all of his life—they go instead on a faultfinding mission! They find Jesus guilty of breaking the Third Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,” in two important ways!

A. By making the clay with his own spittle that our Lord then placed upon this blind man's eyes, they declare Jesus guilty of working on the Sabbath Day! But here is just another example of how knit-picky they were when they sought to give a faithful interpretation to the law of God. They taught that a man could not walk out upon the public streets of Jerusalem, or any other city for that matter, if the sandals he was wearing had the soles of these sandals fastened to the straps on these sandals with little medal nails—because the nails were heavy enough, in their estimation, to be classified as working on the Sabbath Day by—carrying a burden—and that would also by have been a sin against the Third Commandment!

B. Secondly, Jesus “healing” the blind man of his blindness would have also made our Lord guilty of working on the Sabbath Day too. But please notice how, this man's understanding of Jesus, grows exponentially in a relatively short time.

(1) First he identifies Jesus as a “Man!”

In verse 11 we read that as the now-sighted man was being cross-examined by the Pharisees, as to how exactly he had received his sight, he told the religious authorities in verse 11: *“The MAN called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash!’”*

Yes, this man's initial estimation of Jesus was a correct one. As we have come to believe in Luther's explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed as found in the **SMALL CATECHISM**, we believe that Jesus is: “True Man, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary” (Martin Luther's **SMALL CATECHISM**, 2nd ARTICLE, APOSTLES CREED).

(2) But secondly he goes on to call Jesus a “PROPHET. When the Pharisees not only asked him how he was healed, once again, and the man replied: *“He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see!”* They furthermore proceeded to ask the former blind man: “What is your estimation of him? That's when this now-sighted man replied: “He is a prophet” (v. 17)! **At this, of**

course, the Pharisees take a great offense! Also embracing that false teaching that those who were sick or disabled—were sick or disabled because God was punishing them because of their sin, or **PUNISHING THEM FOR SOME SIN THEIR LOVED ONES MAY HAVE COMMITTED!** They responded: *“Would you, who were born in utter sin (because he had been born blind), instruct us?”* The Pharisees were now so upset by the truth this man was now confessing that—threw him out of the temple altogether(v. 34)! Please note, however, that Jesus the Good Shepherd that Jesus always was and is—goes out in search of this man!

(3) Thirdly, the blind man comes to a place in his understanding of who Jesus is—that he not only confesses Jesus to first of all be a “MAN,” but secondly, to be “A PROPHET,” but thirdly now confesses Jesus to be: “THE SON OF MAN!”

Which in many places throughout the Old Testament, especially in the book of Ezekiel—that term the “SON OF MAN” was 100% conclusively a synonym for the **PROMISED SAVIOR OF THE WORLD!**

This man came to see that Jesus did things which were certainly far beyond the human power of any other ordinary man to do—besides, of which, Jesus knew things that were far beyond human knowledge!

Napoleon was once in company with a number of skeptics who dismissed Jesus as a great MAN and nothing more. “Gentlemen,” said Napoleon, “I know men and Jesus Christ was more than a man!” Then Napoleon continued: “If Jesus Christ is a man, and only a man—I say, that of all mankind I cleave to him and to him I will cleave always. If Jesus Christ is God—and the only true God—I swear, I will follow him through heaven and hell, the earth, the sea and the air!”

It was the renowned commentator, William Barclay, who one day observed: “The tremendous thing about Jesus Christ is that the better we come to know him, the greater he becomes to us! The trouble with all of our human relationships, with other people like ourselves, that it is invariably true—the better we get to know another person—the more we will certainly, over time, become aware of their weaknesses, be it man or woman, and that they, just like us, are people with feet of clay. **BUT THE MORE WE KNOW JESUS—THE GREATER OUR WONDER BECOMES! THIS WILL BE TRUE—NOT ONLY IN THE PRESENT TIME—BUT ALSO IN ETERNITY!**

Some who study this Gospel lesson this morning might conclude that it is our loyalty to Jesus that brings us the true revelation of who he is! But as I read the New Testament, I am grateful to believe, FAR MORE ACCURATELY, THAT IT IS JESUS’ LOYALTY TO GOD THE FATHER, who sent him into this world to save us from our sins, and Jesus’ loyalty—in laying down his life for US as our Good Shepherd—who brings US the far greater revelation.

This how the writer of Hebrews summed up the whole thing when he said in Hebrews 10: “Let us hold on to the confession of our faith without wavering, for he who promised is faithful! Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:23-25)! AMEN