

John 9 Jesus and 'Man Born Blind'

In cultures other than ours, baby names say something about the person. Milton Born With a Tooth is the real name of a real person. He was apparently born with a tooth. Does anyone know the name of the new president of Nigeria? (Goodluck Jonathan!) (wonderful name for a president!)

This story is about Jesus and a guy named, 'Man Born Blind'. There is blindness everywhere in this story. If you read the story closely you will notice that there are only two people who see. Jesus does. 'Man Born Blind' does after Jesus heals him.

The disciples are blind. They do not see a man sitting along the road. They see an interesting theological question. "Whose fault is it that he was born blind?" Did his parents sin? Did they fail to live up to God's law? Or, did he somehow sin before he was even born?

They want some insight. Why was he born blind, why did his parents take him to doctors who gave up, why did they have to raise a blind boy, who never got married and had kids and only learned to be a beggar? Why?

Jesus says, '**this has nothing to do with sin.**' That is a blind question.

Instead Jesus says something outrageous. 'Man born blind' has suffered long so that **this** day would come. It happened so that many eyes would be opened to the work and the character of God.

Who says something like that? That's outrageous. Who dares to say to a man who has stumbled around and had to be led around his whole life, while people

made comments about where the sin was, that all of this suffering was so that other people might see something about God that they need to see?

Ignorant people say things like that. A marriage ends in painful divorce, an accident takes a life, a mother suffers a stroke and someone says, 'this happened for God's glory'. We really have to be careful. We don't have that kind of perspective and it never is a simple equation. Those words can be hurtful to the sufferer.

But Jesus can say it. Jesus says, did you notice, 'as long as it is day, **we** must do the work of him who sent me. As long as it is day, **we the church** must be about the work of help and healing and the ministry of comfort and compassion.

Then, because he is Jesus, he takes a handful of dust, spits in it and pushes the slimy muck into the eyes of 'Man Born Blind'.

He tells him, 'Go, wash in the Pool called 'Sent', and the work of the one who sent me will be done in you.'

Man Born Blind follows orders. He is healed! He can see!

The neighbours are interested. But they cannot tell if it is the same man. A problem apparently with their ability to see.

The Pharisees are interested.

Why?

Is it because they want to see a beggar start to live a new free life?

(All together now...) '**No!**'.

They are blind. They only see that the Sabbath wrecker is at work again.

They argue with MBB. He argues back.

They drag his parents into it. Mom and dad are afraid. They are tired of the struggle. Having a visually impaired son has pushed them to the outside of the community. Their worst fear is that they will be kicked out of the synagogue. They waffle and pull back from the conversation.

'Man Born Blind' has been an outcast all his life. It doesn't matter to him. And life on the street has taught him some toughness. He won't back down. They argue some more. They don't want a Sabbath breaker to get credit for a miracle.

'Man Born Blind' has the stopper.

'Here is what I know. I once was blind, but now I see!'

They get nasty.

He gets mouthy.

They throw him out.

Jesus hears what has happened to him.

Jesus goes looking for him.

Jesus finds him.

Jesus asks him the question that tells deep blindness.

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

This is **the question**.

It is the question that still tells blindness. Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

Someday Liam (baby boy who was baptized earlier in this service) will be asked, 'Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God sent to redeem the world? Do you love and trust him as the one who saves you from your sin, and do you with repentance and joy embrace him as Lord of your life?'

Our job, yours as parents, all the rest of us with you is to pray and live so that one day Liam's eyes will be opened and that he will say, 'yes'. 'I see that Jesus is my Saviour!'

Alton and Brenda, you will spend the rest of your lives learning just what your son's baptism calls you to. It calls you to lead by trusting Jesus with your anxieties for life and for Liam. That's huge. So here is one small thing.

One small thing that helps us grow the capacity for trust when we are babies is face time with our parents. So here is what you do. You look into Liam's eyes and you smile and you make faces and you look and you look until he looks away, because only then has he had enough. Two years ago our son Regan was in basketball provincials in Calgary and I witnessed a grievous evil. I was walking through the lobby of the rec centre. Over in the corner was a dad and his baby. The baby was in a stroller. Dad was facing him, but his Blackberry was all he was really interested in. It was terrible. And as soon as that baby gets his little hands on the Blackberry, he will send his dad a video of 'Cat's in the Cradle' by Harry Chapin Carpenter.

Do **you** believe in the Son of Man?

That is the question that tells blindness.

We are all 'Man Born Blind'. We are all, 'Woman Born Blind'. Liam was born perfect in every way, he even had a 'better than text book' delivery into this world. But when it comes to Jesus, he's blind too. And it is your call as parents, and ours with you to show and tell the love and power of Jesus so that he can see.

We are born blind to our need for Jesus. Nothing in our culture helps us to know that we need a Saviour.

Our blindness shows in how we report what we see and how we describe what we see. A husband, to use a harsh example, a husband who calls his wife names or curses her is really saying, 'I am blind as a bat.' 'I am blinded by my fears and my resentments. I cannot see myself as a person worth loving and I cannot see you as one either'.

A person who sees someone in pain as a theological riddle, a person who thinks **we** get to call the shots in life, a person who cannot believe that he is loved by Jesus, is blind.

Jesus opens the eyes of people born blind.

Jesus opens our eyes. We come to love and trust him. His work of opening our eyes wider and wider continues through our lives. He opens our eyes wider so that as CS Lewis writes in the Voyage of the Dawn Treader (part of a series of books that you parents of young children must read out loud to your kids as they are

snuggled up beside you), (then and only then take them to the movies) as we grow, we see that Jesus is bigger and stronger and more full of love and power than we thought before. His love is deeper. His power is stronger. His trust is safer.

Do you believe in the Son of God? Only Jesus can open eyes. But it is our job to ask the question. I buy gas over at the corner Petro Can. Every time I buy gas the person working there asks if I want to buy lottery tickets. I usually say, 'no I have too much money', or 'I don't believe in the lottery', but this week I thought, 'here is an opening'. The next time the person asks me if I want to buy lottery tickets, I am going to say, 'I don't think Jesus is that crazy about the lottery. Do you believe in Jesus?' Boom! Maybe there are opportunities to pop the question all the time. Who and how can you ask someone?

'Man Born Blind' said, 'yes', and he worshipped Jesus. Because to truly see Jesus is to fall for him. To be bored with Jesus means we just don't see him yet. We are still blind.

When we read the last part of this passage at our Bible study on Tuesday at noon, a number of us were snagged by verse 39 when Jesus says, 'For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'

We wondered, 'what!?' How can Jesus come for judgment when John 3 says that God 'so loved the world'?

Try this:

It is not that Jesus goes around judging as much as it is that reactions to Jesus tell **our** reaction and response to God. If you don't like Jesus and his carelessness about who his friends are, and his rejection of the trappings of power, you won't like God much either. Jesus is the one. He invites us, remember, 'Come and see, come and see!'

Do you believe in the Son of God?

If your answer is, 'I don't know', If you are struggling with your faith, if you are not sure if you believe Jesus is the Son of God, I dare you to pray this prayer. "Jesus, if you really are the Son of God, open my eyes, so I can see you."

The Lord be gracious to you.

The Lord be gracious to me. And, all God's people said, Amen.