

March 19, 2023: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Fourth Sunday in Lent ~

*"I was blind, but now I see."*

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## **Scripture Reading: John 9 v 1-41**

### **I. Introduction:**

How wonderful this life can be when things go well, when we are at peace and find joy in the many things life has to offer. When we feel healthy and our loved ones are good, when we have enough to eat, a comfortable home, when we go for a drive and see the beauty of the earth, and when we come together and enjoy each other's company, these are all wonderful things to experience. But then there are those moments in life when things don't go well. We fall sick, we go through a rough time financially, things happen in our families or our communities that can feel a little unsettling, and worrisome. It then feels like the light inside or around us turns to dark. When we experience darkness like that, we need the comfort from those around us, we need help, and we need light again. Let's have a look at the story of Jesus and the blind man, whose life was turned from darkness into light.

### **II. When healing the blind becomes controversial:**

This story of the healing of the blind man is a powerful story for the blind man himself, and for those around him, and yet it is filled with controversy. Instead of being a joyful occasion for someone in that community to be healed like this, it becomes a subject of interrogation, mistrust, challenge and during it all we find an innocent blind man, who could have been a beggar on the streets, and at the mercy of others as it was the case at the time. He was minding his own business when He was approached by Jesus and His disciples, who wanted to know from Jesus whether his blindness was caused by his or his parents' sinful nature? Jesus immediately corrected that perception in verse 3, *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him"*. With those words Jesus declared the urgency of the work of God,

which makes Him the light of the world, and while He is in this world for a short time, the work must be done before it gets dark, before He leaves this world. He then took mud and spit, covered the man's eyes with it and sent him to the pool of Siloam to wash his eyes, and the man was healed.

This action of Jesus sparked the interest of the neighbors, as well as the Pharisees who heard about this miracle. What happened here? Is this the same man who was sitting on the street corner? The healing of the blind was not an occurrence in the Old Testament and therefore not something they would see happening in their time. What happened to you? Who did this? He himself was ecstatic of course, because his life had been changed, but then he had to tell his story over and over again to those who didn't believe him. His acknowledgement of the fact that Jesus was the one, did not go down well with the Pharisees, who knew who this Jesus was, so they were looking for something to discredit Him. They were arguing amongst themselves saying that this Jesus is not from God, that he is a sinner, because He does not keep the Sabbath. But then again, how could an ordinary human being who is a sinner perform this kind of miracle? After questioning the parents, they sent them back to their son, to question him directly. His answer to them is so profound, "Whether He is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind, but now I see.... If He is not from God, how could He have done this for me?" And then, "do you also want to be one of His disciples?" With this they decided to expel this man from the temple.

### **III. I was blind, but now I see.**

When Jesus came back on the scene after this man was banned from the temple, the most important question He asked the man, was whether he believed in the Son of Man. Who is He, he asked. It is me; you are looking at Him, Jesus said. We will remember a similar conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. "Lord, I believe", he said, and worshipped Him. Then, Jesus explains to the man, who is also now joined by the Pharisees, that His coming into this world becomes a judgment for humanity in how they respond to Him. He did not come to judge the world, but to save the world from its own darkness. It is up to humanity to recognize His presence and purpose, and to be enlightened, or stay in the

dark, by which they place judgment on themselves. This is what He is trying to illustrate by healing him, the blind man from his own darkness and bringing light to him. This story therefore serves to illustrate the spiritual illumination needed by the Pharisees, and humanity in general. This drastic transformation is available for all those who see and hear Him if they could only open their hearts. Those like the Pharisees who think they see, remain blind, because knowing the Law does not open one's heart for the Spirit of God to move inside of you. And so, the blindness belongs to those who cannot see the truth, says Porter in his book, "The Illustrated Guide to the Bible."

#### **IV. Conclusion:**

When Jesus enters the life of a broken person, His work is dramatic and wholesome and brings so much relief, joy and new life to be celebrated. We see that here with this blind man whose awareness of Jesus grew from knowing His name, to realizing that He was a Prophet and that He was from God. His healing from blindness was not just physical, but also deeply spiritual, so he could see God's work through Jesus as the Son of Man, the one who changed his life from dark to light.

Lent is about Jesus' journey in and through the darkness of life, and to the cross. But beyond the cross is the light and the resurrection, the truth about God's power at work. Lent is leading to the Day of Easter, when we will rejoice once again, because Christ is Risen. Lent is a reminder of our own dark struggles, and our own need for enlightenment and peace and joy. We work so hard at building peace and light in our lives. But ultimately, the true light that lifts us out of our darkness comes from God Almighty, and Jesus the Son, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This true light is enduring, it is like a stream flowing through us, and we can drink from it always. May God transform our own lives and help us to discern how to become instruments of spreading the message of light every day where we are, with whom we interact, and in how we respond to the dark areas of life. Amen