

A spoken meditation in three parts on John 9: 1-41.

Meditation I (following John 9: 1-12)

Where to begin with this gospel of the man born blind,
a story as deep as it is long.
Why not just start at the beginning,
with the disciples wondering who's at fault
that this man be born blind?

We, thank God, have access to more medical know-how.
But we still yearn for pat, reassuring answers to scary situations,
hoping against hope that they might inoculate us and our loved ones
against the worst.
"Maybe he smoked," we might say. "Maybe it runs in their family."
Or, well, "maybe she asked for it."
If so, this gives us one less thing to worry about.

But Jesus will have none of this "blaming the victim".
Jesus doesn't dwell on the man's limitations, but his *possibilities*.
I've heard it suggested that this story not be called
"the man born blind" but
the man who received sight. The man who SAW Jesus.

This man is no different than any other man, woman or child ever born,
no different than any of us:
He lives so that God's love, God's light, might be revealed through him.

Meditation II (following John 9: 13-25)

You know what I love about this story?
Not just that the man sees Jesus, but *how* he comes to see.
Jesus reaches down into the mud, mixes it with his own spit
and rubs it on the man's eyes.
You can't get any more down and dirty than that.

Jesus isn't afraid to get his hands dirty.
Sabbath or not, he doesn't let anything get in the way of doing
whatever's needed to show compassion in this world God so loves.

But there's something about this story I don't like.
It's that the references to "the Jews" have too often been used –
mis-used – as a license for bigotry and anti-Semitism.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

These sayings reflect tensions *between and among Jews* at the time of John's Gospel.

It was written during a period when Jews had finally achieved a tenuous legal status in the Roman state, after generations of persecution.

Those Jews who professed Jesus were an added liability and thus expelled from the synagogue as part of a fierce "family feud".

Remember, not only were the man and his parents Jewish. The disciples were Jewish, and Jesus himself was Jewish!

These references to "the Jews" here and elsewhere in John's Gospel should *open our eyes* to the faith and history we share with our Jewish sisters and brothers.

Meditation III (following John 9:26-38)

Not only are the man's eyes opened, but so is his heart and soul, strength and mind. From the moment Jesus first sees him, the man is on a journey from not seeing Jesus at all to seeing something in Jesus no one else could.

The man born blind sees far more than those who were supposed to be enlightened.

This man who sees Jesus shows us the way on such a journey. To begin? Own your vulnerability, your doubt, your darkness. Admit you don't have all the answers. Reject the noxious notion that there could ever be such a thing as a "self-made" man or woman.

It's only by confessing our blindness that we see the healing light of Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

Conclusion (following John 9:39-41)

(Spoken at 8:00; sung by choir at 9:30.)

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see!"

The Gospel of the Lord.

