

## Sunday of the Man Born Blind

CHRIST IS RISEN !!

Who sinned? This is a question that people have been asking for a long time, from Job, to Jeremiah, to our present day tabloids. We live in a calvinist society where we think (even though if we consciously thought about it we'd deny it), never-the-less we live and make policy as if those who were prosperous were blessed, and those who were not had somehow sinned, were bad, or were not worthy. We hear of judges who excuse the crimes of the wealthy and dole out to the poor the harshest of sentences. Even though it is not our conscious thought, it is never-the-less written into our culture in ways we often do not notice. This sort of thought was not unknown in the ancient world, but there were passages from the writings and the prophets that rebutted it.

Job does not sin, yet his wealth and children, and health are gone. His friends are sure that Job did something to cause this. Job did nothing to cause it – and he is vindicated in the end.

Jeremiah: In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. Jer 31:29-30

Yet this understanding still infected the disciples. And they had heard from the healing of the Paralytic Jesus say: Go and sin no more. It would have been easy for them to hear this in conjunction with their previous beliefs.

Yet, this man, Celidonius, did not go blind; he was born blind; he did not have the opportunity to sin. This got the disciples to thinking. . . . to them, suffering was somehow evil. . . Jesus points

out that it is not so, that his suffering is not the result of evil. And through his suffering God is to be glorified. . . . That the works of God might be manifest in him.

Jesus, in the previous chapter of the Gospel told the pharisees that He was the Light of the world. Now, away from the pharisees for the moment He says “While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. Part of the reason this Gospel finds its place before Ascension is that we know what will happen this coming Thursday. The Light of the world will return to His Father and will take to His Father an offering of our humanity that has been sanctified. And as Jesus had told His detractors, “The children of the bridal chamber cannot mourn So long as the Bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.”

And then, to show that He is the Word by Whom all things were created, He spits in the dust and makes mud or clay and re-fashions eyes for the man born with defective eyes; according to the expositilarion from last night he had neither sight nor eyes, and they had to be made, not just healed. Unlike the Paralytic, He does not ask the man if he wants to be healed, nor does He promise healing. He simply sends him to the pool to wash as an act of obedience. And here again, water figures into the story. And the fathers understand the pool of Siloam to be a figure of baptism.

The man comes back seeing. He is illumined, not just physically but also spiritually. Having washed, he encounters Grace.

Now, just as last week with the Samaritan Woman, the Blind man becomes an evangelist. For Jesus not only opened his physical eyes, but also his spiritual eyes. He was a simple beggar, but he confounds the pharisees (the doctors of the law) with his

statements and questions – the same pharisees that were confounded by Jesus a week and a half ago in the middle of the feast. He could see. The pharisees, for all their physical sight, could not see. They were blind.

Jesus healed on the Sabbath. The pharisees could not see past this.

The pharisees began to use all the rhetorical tricks they knew to somehow invalidate the miracle that had been performed by Jesus. (Some of those rhetorical tricks are still used today.) They wanted to see his birth certificate; they called his parents. “Is this YOUR SON whom YOU SAY was born blind?” It was as if they were accusing the parents of blinding their son after he was born. Then when the parents verify their son and his blindness they try again: “GIVE GLORY TO GOD! We know that this man is a sinner!” They say ‘Give glory to God.’ but they are really asking the man to blaspheme God.

The man born blind responds with humility, saying only what he knows while not agreeing with their conclusions. Then they badger the witness, asking him what they’ve already asked. This simple beggar refused to be badgered. He then turns it back on the Pharisees: “Why do you ask again? do you want to be His disciples too?”

The pharisees are still trying to “prove” Jesus to be a sinner. The man born blind puts forth that a sinner could not do what He just did. Not even Moses healed a man born blind.

And with that, this simple beggar shows himself to be wiser than the pharisees. And . . . they . . . can’t stand it. . . . “You were utterly born in sin, and you dare to teach us?”

They basically called him an S.O.B and threw him out.

Jesus then finds the man and completes his illumination. As He

revealed Himself to the Samaritan woman last week, so now He reveals Himself to the man born blind. This is the first time that the man actually sees Jesus, though he recognizes His voice. Celidonius would later go with Lazarus and Massilia helping two Saints who became bishops in Cyprus and in Gaul.

Jesus makes a reference to the prophesy of Isaiah: See and in seeing perceive not; hear and in hearing understand not. . . . “. . .and those who see may become blind.” . . . The pharisees overhear that and respond with “Oh, so we’re blind?!” Jesus tells them that because they assume they can see that they are responsible for their sin as if they could really see it. Their assumption that they can see prevents them from exploring the many ways they are blind. This miracle had been done before them, and they refused to see. And Christ calls their refusal to see a sin.

In seeing that the blind man was illumined in spirit: How do our eyes work for seeing the deeper things of God?

What can we not see? What can we not even perceive that we aren’t seeing?

We live in a culture that discourages personal inventory, of looking at ourselves, at what passions drive us. Our culture would rather sell stuff to our passions than have us look at what is making our choices for us. We live in a culture that would rather make empty accusations than examine what has really happened. We live in a culture that would rather us not see. Yet, to grow spiritually we need to look at those very things. To break the cycle of greed, lust, envy we need to look into ourselves honestly and see the uncomfortable things (both good and bad) about us, . . . and own those things . . . and bring them to God . . . and work with Him to let those things be healed.