

Title: *Embracing the Light and Sharing the Light*

Subtitle: Taking responsibility for the light you receive

Lent is a time for us to focus on how we can live more fully in the light of God’s love, but sometimes to do this, we need examples of both how and how not to do it. Fortunately, our Gospel today provides both such examples. In it, we see our Lord breaking through false assumptions and exposing those who twist and deny the truth for their own purposes. Ultimately as the narrative unfolds, it reveals Jesus for who he is, “The Light of the world.”

The story begins as our Lord passes by and sees “a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’”¹ The disciples’ assumption that either the man himself or his parents must have been at fault was in line with contemporary theories. But Jesus broke through those assumptions and brought to light things people don’t often see or even want to see.

It has been said that asking stupid questions can only result in foolish answers. The disciples were asking wrong questions based on false assumptions. And the religious leaders in this story end up doing the same thing. Yet, in the end, the one most hungry for truth finds it and, as a result, comes to a place of worshiping the one who is the truth personified.

The physical healing of the man born blind is complex, with subthemes containing questions, conflicts, and spiritual confusion that are primarily artificial and self-centered. The Pharisees didn’t want to acknowledge a miracle had occurred because they had personal turf to protect. And as the story

¹ John 9:1-2

unfolds, there is one denial after another in the attempt to come up with something other than the truth, which would expose their narrow view of God.

Amid this confusion, Jesus sees the man's blindness as another opportunity to do the works of God and says, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with mud and said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing."²

The miracles recorded in John's Gospel are signs meant to teach profound truths. For example, only God could heal a man born blind, and the miracle, therefore, was another verification of our Lord's identity.

But spiritual truths take "eyes to see, and ears to hear," which is a gift that only God can give. Earlier, Jesus said, "For this people's heart has grown callous and dull, and with their ears, they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them."³

It takes an open, teachable, and hungry heart to discern the truth of these things.

In the philosophical world where arguments are dissected, there is a Latin term called "Ad Hominem." The Latin phrase literally means "To the person." The term describes an attempt to refute an argument by attacking the defendant's character instead of refuting the issue at hand. In this context, the Pharisees abusively attacked not just Jesus but also the man born blind.

² John 9:5-7

³ Matthew 13:15

First, they claimed, “We know this man is a sinner,”⁴ without providing evidence to support such a claim. Then they brush off the healing based on the man’s association with Jesus by asserting, “You are a disciple of Jesus, but we are disciples of Moses,”⁵ Lastly, they appeal to their own authority, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?”⁶

Yet the evidence pointed to something greater, that Jesus was, in truth, the Messiah, as predicted by Isaiah, who wrote that when your God shall come, “the eyes of the blind shall be opened.”⁷

But such miracles in and of themselves do not produce faith. So “what began as a tragic tale of one man’s blindness ends as a surreal tale of everyone else’s blindness.”⁸

The opponents of Jesus are concerned only with their own agenda, authority, and control of other people. As a result, the judgment Jesus makes at the end of the story stands against them when he says, “For judgment, I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.”⁹

Jesus had a mission and said, “*As long as it is day, I must do the works of him who sent me. The night is coming when no one can work.*”¹⁰ And we are called to share in that mission. Our mission, therefore, is to bring the light of Christ to others. And that light, when received, begins to grow, just as the

⁴ John 9:24

⁵ John 9:28

⁶ John 9:34

⁷ Isaiah 35:5

⁸ Yancey, p. 170

⁹ John 9:39

¹⁰ John 9:4

progression in the healed man's understanding of Jesus grew as he was challenged and questioned by those in authority.

- 1) Initially, he only refers to Jesus as “the man”¹¹ who had rubbed clay on his eyes and sent him to the pool to be healed.
- 2) Later, he refers to Jesus as “a prophet,”¹²
- 3) and one who is to be followed as a “disciple.”¹³
- 4) Then he comes to realize that Jesus must be the One “from God.”¹⁴
- 5) Finally, by the time he ends up in front of Jesus, he confesses, “Lord, I believe,”¹⁵ and he worshipped him.

Worship is something that is lived out through a life of love and service. And we have seen how that life begins by embracing the truth for oneself, regardless of what others may think.

In a portion of a courtroom statement given by a woman who was sexually assaulted, she addressed the one who abused her with these words before he was sentenced:

Throughout this process, I clung to a quote by C. S. Lewis, where he reflected back at a time when he admitted, “my argument against God was that the universe seems so cruel and unjust. But how did I get this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he first

¹¹ John 9:11

¹² John 9:17

¹³ John 9:29

¹⁴ John 9:33

¹⁵ John 9:38

has some idea of straight. What was I comparing the universe to when I called it unjust?”

Larry, I can call what you did evil and wicked because it was. And I know it was evil and wicked because the straight line exists. The straight line is not measured based on your perception (alone), and this means I can speak the truth about my abuse without minimization or mitigation. And I can call it evil because I know what goodness is. And this is why I pity you. Because when a person loses the ability to define good and evil, they can no longer define and enjoy what is truly good.¹⁶

These words by gymnast Rachael Denhollander in 2018 give us a glimpse of how to live more fully in the light of God’s love, where “the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.”¹⁷ Therefore Jesus said, “While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become children of light.”¹⁸ In this calling, our greatest joy is “to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.”¹⁹ *Amen.*

¹⁶ Jeremiah, David . Overcomer (pp. 61-62). Thomas Nelson, Words quoted by Rachael Denhollander.

¹⁷ Ephesians 5:9

¹⁸ John 12:36

¹⁹ Mark 12:30 paraphrased