

March 2, 2008

## The Two Mirrors

Have you ever woken up, blinked your eyes, stretched your arms, took a breath and realized oh no I've got a sore throat? Of course you have now, what was the reaction of your spouse, friends or co-workers? Did they say things like, "Not getting enough sleep its catching up with you" or "You know you're not drinking enough water you really need to be drinking more" or "Vitamin C that's what you need more vitamin C" or possibly the favorite "I told you, you should have taken airborne". A similar situation greets us in our gospel this morning however, this person's problems are much worse than a sore throat. The man is blind Jesus' disciples begin the diagnosis he sinned, no his parents sinned and finally they turn to the great authority and ask, "Jesus what is it? Why is he blind?" Notice the profound answer that Jesus gives, "This happens so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." Now if that isn't the most perfect answer for the proverbial why question I don't know what is. Even in the worst situation in life God can act and glory can be given to Him but let's focus on that work of God displayed in this man's life.

This story invites us to see the man born with blindness is the mirror we are called to be as Christians. His miracle is our miracle. We see a man who doesn't just gain eyesight so he can identify trees, bushes, building and people he gains spiritual vision to see the truth and distinguish it from illusion. How does this occur? Through a series of steps that this man goes through lets follow him on that journey. The first step comes with Jesus' actions and words. Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud and puts it on the man's eyes. He then tells the man, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." Which John states means sent. There's a little word play here Jesus is sent to be the Messiah the true God, true man to express God's love for us. The blind man is sent to Jesus so that God's work may be fulfilled or displayed in his life. The man in turn is sent by Jesus to the pool to complete the healing. In each case the response to the sending is obedience. The first step in becoming a mirror is to be obedient to God's call. Being obedient is a very difficult first step but the second step is a real doozy. The man is called to answer questions to give a witness or testimony of what has been done.

It begins with his neighbors who say, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Others said, "No he only looks like him" but he himself insisted I am the man. "How were your eyes opened?" they demanded. The man replied, "the man they call Jesus made some mud, put it on my eyes he told me to go to Siloam and wash so I went and washed and then I could see." This evidentially doesn't fulfill what the people wanted. They still aren't believing. So they take it to the next step they take the man to the Pharisees who ask him to recount the events so that they could scrutinize the details. His answer it was the Sabbath and, "He put mud on my eyes and I washed and now I see." There's the problem it was the Sabbath obviously, "this man is not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath." But the Pharisees themselves begin to argue, if Jesus is not from God how could he do this? So they turn back to the blind man and ask, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." Called to witness again he answers, "He is a prophet." Well, that's not what the Pharisees wanted to hear so they called in his parents who didn't want to answer any questions because they were afraid, it's the old, "I don't want to get involved" syndrome. So they bring the man back in and they question him again they say, "give glory to God we know this man is a sinner." And the man replies, "whether he is a sinner or not I do not know one thing I do know I was blind but now I see." The Pharisees ask again, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" The man bears witness yet again, "I have told you already and you did not listen why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples too?" Now that send the Pharisees right over the edge they say to him, "You are this fellow's disciple we are disciples of Moses we know that God spoke to Moses but as for this fellow we don't even know where he comes from." They hurled insults at him they ridiculed him they're not asking questions anymore and the blind man takes the third step. He believed and as a result was obedient he gave testimony to what he was questioned on and now he's going to give testimony without being asked.

He testifies and says, "Now that is remarkable you don't know where he comes from yet he already opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinner he listens to the Godly man who does his will nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God he could do nothing." We see that the Pharisees are so sure that their sight is perfect that they

become blind to everything but their expectations. The blind man's transformation comes from his ability to see what actually is not merely what he expects for once. He becomes a light giver himself by simply holding true to the truth he has seen. Which leads to the fourth step.

The fourth step is a step of humility and courage in the face of threats he holds true. This takes tremendous courage but he also never elevates himself and makes himself to be more than a blind man who can now see. He doesn't take any credit, doesn't say in any way I deserve this, you never hear I he speaks the truth because it is the truth and by holding to his testimony by holding to the truth the Pharisees cannot rewrite this story and turn it into a magic trick or a staged event. The final step can be applied to the disciples too. We've talked about it before as we see in the windows of the church and the symbols that are there many of those symbols reference how those disciples died. The disciples died for their faith for their belief but that really doesn't do justice to what they really did. Because as you know many people die because of what they believe in. A terrorist blows himself up because of his belief but people die for their beliefs because they have been taught wrong. You see their beliefs are false they have been taught false beliefs false truths in fact it is a lie. So they die because they don't know any better they were taught wrong. Like the blind man the disciples aren't dealing with what they were taught, the disciples are dealing with what they saw. They saw Jesus after he had risen from the dead and like the blind man they weren't willing to change their testimony. Like the blind man they had nothing to gain by standing on their testimony other than ridicule and persecution. The disciples were not executed because of their belief the disciples were executed because they refused to change their testimony that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

This is the journey the blind man and the disciples took it is also a journey the Pharisees took. Same journey, two completely different outcomes. Two completely different mirrors the Pharisees were stuck in their ways they didn't want to be obedient to god's call to be the leaders of the people they didn't want to give a testimony for what was done they didn't want to humble themselves and let God be in control. They didn't have the courage to change as a result they became a mirror that reflected an illusion it reflected their personal thoughts it reflected what they had devised as being correct. It

reflected what they were comfortable with but that reflection was an illusion it was not the truth.

The blind man became a bearer of truth he reflected the clarity for god's love, forgiveness and transforming power. The account of John 9 ends with him worshipping Jesus. Two mirrors two choices. One is the image of God and the other illusion and deceit. This lent may we see clearly and choose wisely so that others may see clearly and choose wisely too.

In our savior's name, Amen.