

Holy Spit
John 9: 1-17

Rabbi, who sinned- this man or his parents that he was born blind? It sounds more like a question the Pharisees would have asked Jesus rather than his closest followers. We don't know whether it was out of morbid curiosity like rubberneckers at a Biblical traffic accident or a genuine desire to understand the man's condition but either way they asked Jesus a loaded question with no good answer.

If the man's personal sin was responsible for his birth defect it would mean he sinned while he was still in his mother's womb, a premise bordering on the ridiculous. And if his blindness could result from personal sin in his parent's lives, what prospective parent would take a chance on bringing a child into the world in that condition? Either premise might lead one to assume that the man deserved to be blind and beg for a living.

Rabbi, who sinned- this man or his parents that he was born blind? Do you wonder if the blind man asked himself that same question on occasion, especially at the end of a day of begging when the dirty and banged up cup he used to collect a few mynas remained empty? God what did I do to deserve this? The fact is that there will be times when we will struggle to understand human suffering, whether it is in our life or that of someone we love. We will need help seeing Jesus.

The disciples were no different. They recognized that sin, which in simple terms is the willful disobedience of God, and suffering, which in simple terms is human misery, are often connected. That unholy alliance began in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, where their disobedience to God resulted in their banishment from paradise and a seemingly continuous human cycle of sin, suffering, repentance, and forgiveness. Beginning with their firstborn children Cain and Abel, we find that envy, jealousy, and unrighteous anger leads to violence, which results in bloodshed, death, and the pain of separation. Throughout human history we find that greed results in selfishness, which can lead to poverty, which can lead to the pain of children with an empty stomach. Time after time we find that broken promises can lead to broken relationships, which can lead to suffering of many sorts. Sin and suffering often go together, a cycle that continues today. The question is how do we break it?

Much like the early disciples of Jesus, we also struggle to understand human suffering. We want to know why there is blindness, MS, cancer, heart disease and corona viruses. We want to know who has them, where they came from, when they came down with them and what causes them so we can avoid them at all costs. The disciples did recognize that sin and suffering often go together but Jesus made it clear to them that in this case, unlike the paralytic man He healed earlier, personal sin had nothing to do with his blindness. Verse 3- neither this man nor his parents sinned- he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. The blind man's name wasn't Job, but they did have some things in common.

Can you hear the objections of those who don't know Jesus? How can you believe in a god who would cause a man to be born blind just to demonstrate some sort of supernatural power? How can you worship a god that would allow blindness and suffering to remain when he has the power to end it? Those questions and others like it are ones that people have struggled throughout human history.

Some will simply choose to believe the lie that there is no God. They embrace atheism, which denies the existence of all things spiritual, or secular humanism, a growing movement that says morality is possible without belief in a higher power. It is the idea that we are our own god, capable of determining right and wrong and good and bad entirely on our own. Others will choose to reimagine the God of the Scriptures to be a god that is much less objectionable and far more graceful, a god that soothes our troubled consciences. Still others will insist that the Scriptures are the problem, considering the Bible to be little more than a fictional or mistake ridden book written by deceitful men. But if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that none of those possibilities are satisfactory. The immensity and complexity of creation demands the existence of a divine creator, one who continues to make Himself known to creation through the Scriptures, a God who chooses to reveal Himself in unusually creative ways.

Difficult questions do not have easy answers, yet if we earnestly seek the truth, we will discover it, just as the Samaritan woman Diane spoke about last week did. The simple truth is that God is God, and we are not. The Scriptures and our faith in Jesus are not the problem, but the answer to the problem of sin and suffering. John 8:31-32.

Sin has far-reaching consequences, and it is true that our sin can affect others in ways we cannot see. Even so, Jesus made it clear that this man was blind from birth through no fault of his own. Even so, the fact of the matter was that he was just as blind as one whose blindness was a direct result of sin. The cause of his blindness was secondary and there was work that needed to be done. 9:4 is the key verse. We must (like we must go through Samaria) work the works of the one who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. This was not the time to dwell on the root cause of the man's problem but to do something about it. Much to the horror of some watching Jesus spits on the ground and mixes it with the dry dusty dirt of the desert. Much like the creation account where He forms man from the dust of the earth and gives him life, He makes a paste of dirt and spit-holy spit- and proceeds to anoint the blind man's eyes with it and then tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The Bible says the man went and washed and then returned to Jesus, able to see Him for the first time in his life.

That's when the trouble started. Some in the crowd were unable to believe what they were seeing. In spite of the man's own testimony and the visible proof they refused to believe the guy in front of them was once the blind beggar but someone who happened to look like him and just happened to claim he was healed by Jesus. The Pharisees- the religious leaders who couldn't heal a minor scratch let alone someone blind from birth were outraged. Their jealousy was made evident by their phony sanctimony and regard for the Sabbath. How dare this man make mud on the Sabbath and claim to heal this sinful beggar. How dare you wash on the Sabbath? Like those that deny the existence of God, they were far more blind than the blind man ever was. But there were others that day who opened their eyes and found the truth. Jesus was indeed who He claimed to be, God in human flesh. Jesus gave the man his sight so that His Father in heaven would be glorified and people would know the truth. Relieving his suffering was an added but secondary benefit.

And just in case you thought it was Jesus alone who healed the blind man remember 9:4. We must work the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Jesus reminds His followers us that we have work to do. We must help the world to overcome the things that will harm the soul rather than the things that will harm the body. Time is of the essence, for night is coming

when no one can work. If the headlines of the day and our empty pews are any indication dusk is settling upon us.

Like those done by Jesus, every good work and every good deed we do “must” be done to glorify God and not ourselves. We are to do all that is in our power to help those who are suffering, while there is still time. It is almost second nature to help those with physical needs. As the old saying goes, when the barn is on fire people will come to help put it out without asking. Our challenge is to do the same when it comes to meeting spiritual needs, those times when the barn is burning on the inside and we can’t see it. Our challenge is to help them see Jesus, the Jesus of the Scriptures.

There are many kinds of ailments that afflict people-certainly too many to list here this morning. We live in a fallen world, the domain of Satan. Heartache, pain, and suffering are graphic reminders of the evil that can influence our daily lives. In many ways, we are all like the blind beggar, suffering with some sort of physical infirmity because of the effects of sin. Not just personal sin but universal sin that became part of this world after the fall of Adam and Eve. But there is also something else that affects all of us, something else that can bring us suffering and pain. It is spiritual blindness, the unwillingness to recognize God and His will for our lives.

Jesus came to cure us of that terminal disease. The cycle of sin and suffering is only broken by repentance and forgiveness, by believing that Jesus came to the world to save us from sin. That is the Good News, the gospel, yet nowhere in the Scriptures will we find that Jesus promises us a life on this earth free of pain and suffering. What He does promise is that He will remain with us in our pain and suffering. He says fear not, I will never leave or forsake you, no matter what disease you might have or virus you might catch. He can do that because He experienced the total extremes of both when He was crucified for our sins. Jesus doesn’t promise us a life on this earth free of pain and suffering, but He does offer us something better, a life free of pain and suffering someday on a new earth, a place too beautiful for words to describe. He promises all those who see Him that we will spend eternity with Him in glory. Let the words of the blind man in verse 38 be our words as well. “Lord, I believe”. Amen