**Who’s Blind Anyway? 5 9 2021**

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| **Slide** | **Sermon** |
| 1 | **Title Slide** Who’s Blind Anyway? John 9:1-17, 35-41 |
| 2 | Introduction On the surface our story from John’s gospel is about physical blindness. Jesus and his disciples came upon a man who had been blind from birth. Jesus’ disciples asked the Master who had sinned, the man or his parents, that should be blind. Jesus answered the man’s condition was unrelated to the question of sin, but that God’s glory might be made manifest. Then Jesus spat on the ground and used the spittle to make clay. Anointing the man’s eyes with the clay, Jesus told the man to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The man returned from the pool of Siloam, his vision restored. |
| 3 | The story should have stopped right here with a happy ending, but of course it does not. The neighbors of this formerly blind man are astounded at what has happened to him. They take him to show him to the Pharisees. The unseeing Pharisees are offended that Jesus has healed this man on the Sabbath. “This man is not from God,” they said concerning Jesus, “for he does not keep the Sabbath.” At first they disbelieved the man’s testimony, but when his parents testified that he had indeed been born blind and could now see, the Pharisees had a dilemma. In their eyes, Jesus was a sinner because he did not keep the Sabbath. God certainly would not honor the prayers of a sinner. And yet, here this man stood in front of them who had been given his sight by Jesus. The beleaguered recipient of Jesus’ mercy said with an air of futility, “Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.” |
| 4 | Have you ever noticed that when people get on the defensive, they become huffy? That is how the Pharisees became when confronted with this man and his new vision. Like good lawyers, they began examining the testimony of the witness. They accused him of being a disciple of Jesus and began to revile him. It is interesting that this formerly blind man recognizes that he, who has always lived on the outer edge of society as a beggar, now sees a reality that the Pharisees cannot see. He begins to taunt them over their dilemma. The Pharisees respond the way people always respond when they are losing an argument, they toss him out with a final putdown. “You were born in utter sin, “ they said with disdain, “Would you teach us?” That poor blind man had become God’s object lesson to the Pharisees, but they would not see—they would not hear |
| 5 | Jesus heard about the man being tossed out, and he found him and asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of man?” The man answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you.” The man said, “Lord, I believe.” And the man worshipped Christ. Then Jesus speaks some most interesting words, “For judgement I came into the world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” . Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and asked, “Are we also blind?” And, Of course, that is the meaning of this entire story. The Pharisees were just as blind in their own way as the beggar beside the road whom Jesus had healed. Our story, then, is not really about physical blindness but about spiritual blindness – a disease that afflicted many of these Pharisees and afflicts many sincere people even today. |
| 6 | However, we would be wrong if we did not recognize the valuable contributions that the Pharisees made to the Jewish faith. Contrary to popular belief, they were the progressive party among Orthodox Jews.   * Determined to maintain distinctiveness from pagan, Gentile influence and customs * For the most part good, solid, respectable people trying to keep faith in the midst of cultural influences   They did this by strict following of sacred writings and oral traditions.  They did this with extraordinary zeal and commitment.  Unfortunately, their all-out commitment to the law produced a spiritual blindness. Myopia we would call it today. They saw only what agreed with their faith. To everything else, they were blind! |
| 7 | Our lives fit more in the Pharisee camp than anything else I can see. We also see ourselves as solid citizens, mostly moral, caring about society, public health and quality of life. Yet we are also blind. How so?  Examples:  1) As bad as the pandemic has been – and it has been bad for so many – so many lives lost to it – over 500,000 just in the US, it has also been an eye opener to how vulnerable all of us are. We’ve never witnessed anything else like it! Generally speaking, when it started and we closed our public in-person worship on March 15, 2020, all of us thought – well, a couple of weeks and we’ll be back. I personally thought well we’ll back in church to celebrate Easter. But all of us were blind to the power and the overarching reach of the COVID virus. And no one was exempt – man, woman nor child. Now the older populations were more vulnerable than children. But the speed it traveled around the world was unreal. We were blind to its power to paralyze our nation and the world. And now, more than a year later, with masks and social distancing and handwashing plans and COVID-19 vaccines we are coming out from under this dark year of 2020. I hope the thing we’ve learned is to see with open eyes future threats and act appropriately ahead of time! We were blind. I hope that our experience and with God’s grace we can see and look out for each other. |
| 8 | 2) I believe our eyes are not as blind to race issues as we once were. Nor to the plight of the poor. I’m proud of our constant efforts to give food for the backpack program and the Tiny House Homeless meals program. Yet how many of us still go about our days never really seeing a person of a different race or a poor person and just pass on by never giving them another thought? Often times it takes some type of tragedy to open our eyes to see how persons different from us struggle. We can be blind and not know it, like the Pharisees. |
| 9 | 3) How are we blind to the people we live near? We see each other come and go – maybe we get to know them because we have children the same age or we may go to the pool or clubhouse together. But how blind we are to their struggles in life. From the wave to the car as it goes by we have no idea what is going on in their lives – some facing separation and divorce, some have children that have cancer or other disease, some have parents that are struggling with old age, some have lost loved ones to COVID. And we also have no idea if they have Jesus as their savior, if they go to church somewhere and if they have Christian friends to support them. I have to say we all suffer from blindness to even those we live near! |
| 10 | Our lesson today is about Jesus working with compassionate eyes upon the blind man and reached out to give him sight. It didn’t matter if it was the Sabbath day or not.  Opposite Jesus are the Pharisees. They can see but yet are blind to Jesus – They look for his faults – 1) heals on the Sabbath, 2) comes from Galilee and this doesn’t fit the mold of a Messiah, 3) hasn’t been taught as they have and 4) scares them with his mighty acts of love and compassion. |
| 11 | John tell this story to show the contrast from the “sinners“ gaining sight and the “righteous” being thoroughly blind to who Jesus really is. Where do you find yourself in this story? Don’t be too quick to say you are as the sinner who received his sight, because we all are sinners.  Why do I say this? In today’s world we hold the position of the Pharisees – the good church going folks! Just seriously consider: how are you blind of the poor, people of different races, the many in your neighborhood who don’t know about Jesus, or the needs of those who are suffering alone and need a church family?  May Jesus heal our blindness so we can share his redeeming love! |