

Wesley United Methodist Church

March 30, 2014

"Here's Mud in Your Eye."

John 9:1-41

One day as Jesus and his disciples are walking along together, they see a pitiful sight...a man who has been blind from birth. The disciples watch him groveling and begging there in the gutter. This sightless one with dead eyes makes a sad, haunting picture...as he crouches there and feels in the dirt for scraps of garbage...and wards off with his hands and arms the trampling of people who pass, eating their dust and pleading for their help. Intrigued by this man's horrible plight, the disciples ask Jesus a hard question: Who sinned? Was it this man or his parents? Why was he born blind? Was it his fault? Or did someone in his family do something wrong to cause this?

There is an interesting theological point here. The religious leaders of Jesus' time had the mistaken notion that the persons who were down on their luck were in that fix because they had sinned...and this was God's judgment upon them for their wrongdoings. So these blind people, or lame people, or leprous people were looked down upon by society as sinners, as wicked people and they were shunned. But Jesus didn't see them as sinners or wicked people. He saw them as children of God, as persons of worth, as brothers and sisters...and he loved them and embraced them and enjoyed them...and healed them.

So, here in John 9 Jesus goes over to the blind man to help him. Notice that when the disciples see the blind man, they see something to discuss, but Jesus sees him. He sees something to do. The disciples want to give their energy to words. Jesus put his energy in action. The point is this: It's not enough to talk about it. What pleases God is when we do something about it. So, Jesus spits on the ground and makes clay of the spittle and then he anoints the man's eyes with the mud. Now, if that seems repulsive to you, don't let it be. Saliva has long been a folk remedy. When we had a cut or a scrape or a mosquito bite, I remember my Dad telling me to put spit on it.

Let's look at the rest of the story. After anointing the man's eyes with the mud, Jesus sends him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man goes, washes away the clay, and comes back seeing! The neighbors are amazed. They can't believe it. They ask him how this happened and he says the man called Jesus healed me. He gave me my sight. And there is great joy in the city and they all live happily ever after?...No, not quite! The Pharisees, the watchdogs of religion, get wind of this...and they come out fuming...upset about the whole thing...because for one thing they are suspicious of everything Jesus does...and on top of that, it happened on the Sabbath Day...a blatant violation of their rigid rules. "He made clay"... "He healed"...on the Sabbath...and that is strictly forbidden. We can't have that!

So, they come out with the fervor of Barney Fife to investigate. They interrogate the healed man's parents...and scare them out of their wits...and then they interrogate the man who has been healed...and he gives them a classic and powerful response that has resounded across the centuries. He says, "This one thing I know. Once I was blind, but now I see." The Pharisees are defeated by this argument and they know it. So they do what people often do when they feel insecure or have no moral power...they turn to force. They kick him out. They throw him out of the synagogue. They excommunicate him. They push him out.

This sets the stage for one of the most beautiful moments of all scripture. Jesus hears about it. He hears that they cast him out and Jesus comes to find him. Aware of his trouble, Jesus comes to him. He comes to help.. That's the good news, isn't it...it's when we are in trouble Jesus

comes to help! And when they come face to face Jesus says to him: “Do you believe in me, the Son of God?” And the healed man says: “Yes, Lord, I believe,” and he worships him.

Isn't it a great story? It's so packed with the stuff of life. There is so much here...blindness and sight, sickness and healing, prejudice and love, fear and faith, rejection and acceptance, defeat and victory. But there is one question that jumps out of this story and it jumps directly into our faces. Have your eyes been anointed with the mud of Jesus? Can you see with the eyes of Christ? Let me break this down a bit and be more specific...

You were born blind...and so was I. Throughout infancy, childhood, into the teen years, even into adulthood some of us have our own agendas and live selfish lives. When our eyes are opened we move from our selfish vision to service vision, we move from 'do something for me' to 'let me do something for you.' Let me ask you something. Can you see beyond your own selfish desires? Can you see yourself as a servant of Jesus Christ? Do you pick and choose your service?

There is a powerful story about a mom who took her children to a crowded restaurant one day. Her six-year-old son asked if he could say the grace. He prayed: “God is great and God is good, let us thank him for our food, and God I would thank you even more if Mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all. Amen. Along with the laughter from some other customers nearby, the woman at the very next table growled loudly: “That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. The very idea...asking God for ice cream! Why I never!”

Hearing this, the little boy burst into tears and he asked his mother: “Did I do it wrong? I'm sorry. Is God mad at me?” The little boy's mother pulled him over into her lap. She hugged him tightly and assured him that he had done a terrific job with his prayer and God certainly was not made at him. Just then an elderly gentleman walked over to the table. He winked at the little boy and he said: “I know God really well. We visit every day and I happen to know that God loved your prayer. It may have been the best one he has heard all day.” “Really?” the little boy asked. “Cross my heart,” said the man. Then he leaned over and whispered into the boy's ear. Pointing at the woman at the next table who had made the remark that started the whole thing, he said: “Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes.”

Naturally, the mom ordered ice cream for her kids at the end of the meal. The little six-year-old boy stared at his for a moment and then he did something that no one in that restaurant that day will ever forget. He picked up his sundae and without a word walked over and placed it in front of the woman at the next table. With a big smile he said to her: “Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes and my soul is good already!” The people in the restaurant applauded and somewhere in heaven Jesus was smiling...because that little boy had already learned how to look at others with the eyes of Jesus. Sight (true sight) is always a matter of the heart...not the eyes.

When our eyes have been touched with the mud of Jesus, we see with our hearts...and we realize what Jesus taught long ago...That we are all in this together, that we are all persons for whom Christ came and died.

When our eyes are anointed with the mud of Christ...the Spirit of Christ...then we see people differently. We see them as part of God's family...and accept them and embrace them and treat them with respect and love.

There is something fascinating here in John 9. Don't miss this now. Notice the way the healed man refers to Jesus. Notice the change...First, he refers to Jesus as a man. He says, “The man

Jesus did this for me.” Next, He calls Jesus a prophet. He says, “To be able to do this he must be a prophet.” Then in that intimate moment at the end he sees him as the Son of God. He claims him as “The Lord of His Life.”

The more time we spend with Jesus, the closer we get to him, the clearer we see God! Amen.