

Narrator: As Jesus and his disciples walked along one Sabbath day, they saw a man born blind. Believing that his blindness was some sort of punishment, his disciples asked whether it was the man's sin or his parents' sin that caused him to be born blind.

Jesus: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work God's works while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Narrator: When Jesus said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, and told the man to wash in the pool of Siloam, the pool of sending.

The man went, washed, and came back able to see. His neighbors were confused, and began to ask whether or not he was the same man, or just looked like him.

Man Born Blind: "I am the man! The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight."

Narrator: They wanted to know where Jesus was, but the man born blind did not know, so instead they brought the Pharisees to continue asking him questions about how he received his sight.

MBB: "Jesus put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

Narrator: The Pharisees were as divided as the neighbors. Some said that because Jesus healed on the Sabbath, he could not be from God. Others said that such a healing could only come from God. So they asked the man what he thought:

MBB: "He is a prophet."

Narrator: Some wondered whether the whole thing was a hoax, so they went to his parents. His parents were afraid, so while they were willing to confirm that he was their son and had been born blind, they refused to discuss why he could now see. His parents said, "ask him, he is of age, he will speak for himself." So they turned to the man born blind, "Jesus is a sinner! Tell us the truth about your sight."

MBB: "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

Narrator: Well, that made them angry. They said, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

MBB: "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.

Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Narrator: The Pharisees accused him of being born in sin, and drove him out. But Jesus heard what had happened, and looked for him.

Jesus: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

MBB: "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."

Jesus: "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."

MBB: "Lord, I believe."

Narrator: The man worshipped Jesus, as Jesus turned to his disciples and others who had gathered nearby (including some Pharisees) to teach.

Jesus: "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind. If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains." (*Dramatic Reading Source Unknown, possibly Spill the Beans Curriculum*)

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Many commentators note that there are multiple forms of blindness in today's reading. Obviously the literal, physical blindness of the man born blind, but also the disciples' misunderstanding of the source of his blindness, and the religious leaders' fixation on rules and regulations and unwillingness to see the miracle unfolding before their own eyes. Perhaps we can even identify blindness in the neighbors and the parents. All of us, all humans, have limited vision. Ideally through spiritual practice, lifelong learning, our vision expands. I hope that something of the substantial time we've shared together in ministry has helped to expand your vision. What is something you can see now, that perhaps you couldn't see before we met?

I'll try to go first. I see more clearly now my own capacities for group facilitation and conflict management. I see more clearly the value of zoom in ministry. I see more clearly the resilience and generosity of this faith community. I see more clearly the ways that anxiety and grief can block forward movement and the ways clear process can allow forward movement. I see much more clearly potential for shared ministry between St. A's and other Presbyterian congregations in SW Portland; I think we've only glimpsed the tip of the iceberg in that regard, but I see so much potential. And part of what I see more clearly now, is God's call to me to serve the wider church full time, which is why I am stepping away.

That's enough from me. How about you? What's something you can see now, or see more fully now, than before we met? Please come to a microphone or raise your hand and then unmute on zoom to share.