

## ***We're Blind***

John 9:1-7

Sermon by Dan Schrock

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Lent 4

The healing of the blind man in John 9 is probably the longest healing story of Jesus, lasting 41 verses. To keep this video to a manageable length, I'm only going to read verses 1-7, adapted from the NRSV.

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup>We must work the works of God who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

<sup>6</sup>When Jesus said this, he spat on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud on the man's eyes, <sup>7</sup>saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then the man went, washed, and came back able to see.

### I

These days, we are blind. We really, really wish it were not so. But in truth, right now we are all blind people.

### II

Up until 2 or 3 weeks ago, most of us had established, predictable, and comfortable lives. We got out of bed, dressed, and went off to work or school or

whatever else we did during the day. We met our friends for lunch at Maple Indian. We went to concerts and ball games.

On Sunday mornings, we came together in our church building to worship, socialize, and learn. In face-to-face relationships, we sang hymns, drank coffee, and shared bits and pieces of our lives with each other.

Back there in the good old days, we knew more or less what expect from day to day.

### III

Much has changed in the last few weeks. A lot of us are now staying at home most of the day or all of the day. We don't have much face-to-face contact with other people, except the ones we live with. For the extroverts in our congregation, this is especially hard, because extroverts thrive on talking with other people, going to events, and participating in group activities.

COVID-19 has also changed the way we relate with each other as a congregation. We can't sing together in the sanctuary. We can't meet in our classrooms for spiritual formation. We can't have potlucks in the fellowship hall.

A bit like the man in John 9, we are now blind. We do not really know how the coronavirus will shift our lives, or for how long. Will this last for weeks or months? Nobody knows, although the weight of opinion seems to be shifting to the possibility this will last for months. We are uncertain about many things, and that uncertainty makes us anxious.

Most of us have never been in this situation before. We're operating a little like people who are blind. What do we do in this situation? How can we relate? How do we cope? Act? Think? Feel? As Paul says in Romans 8:26, we aren't even sure how to pray as we ought to.

## IV

And yet, we do know some things. We know our vision and mission as a congregation have not changed. We still want to welcome many different kinds of people into our orbit of relationships. We still want to support caregiving and mission through our church budget.

Maybe we can ask Jesus to open our eyes to this new situation we're living in. When Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man, the man saw a whole new world he had never seen before: fig trees and olive trees, camels and sheep, the colors blue and red and yellow, the smiles on the faces of his friends. With his new set of eyes, I imagine he felt energized by all the possibilities, delighted with all the things he could explore for the first time.

Perhaps John 9 is inviting us to see the new world of possibilities that has just opened up for us. Some of our usual ways of being the church don't work so well anymore. But what does work, or what might work? What new ways of being the church will energize us? Instead of focusing on what we cannot do, what if we focus on what we can do? I have 3 small ideas, but you will have more.

1. We can pray for healthcare workers. Our congregation has many doctors, nurses, and therapists. Especially now, they do hugely important work, and we can support them in prayer.
2. We can pick up the phone and call people, or pick up a pen and write them a card. Sunday school teachers could write to the children in their classes. Children could write to their teachers.
3. We can become Christ's loving, caring, healing presence to the people we live with. We'll be spending a lot of time with them for the foreseeable future, and we can deepen our kindness for them.

May God's peace be with all of us.