

Jesus passed by a blind man, blind from birth. Immediately, his disciples started to ask the “Why?” question. Rather than being concerned by the man's plight, showing compassion for his blindness, they want to discuss theology. “Did this man sin, even before he was born, and is that why he is blind?” “Did this man's parents sin causing him to be born blind?” “Why God?” Why?”

Questions without answers, endless questions.

It is so much easier to ask these questions than to do something. For instance, the modern equivalent might be “Why are there so many children dying of hunger? Doesn't God care?” It is easier to ask if God cares, implying that God doesn't, than to ask what we can do, what we should be doing, about hunger. It is but a short step from such a question to the next idea: “If I were God, I would feed the children, prevent blindness.” Yet, we are not God. When we ponder what we might do if we were God, we stop asking what we should do, now, for God.

You'll notice that Jesus does not engage in this debate, whether about sin and disease nor trying to give God advice. He stops the “Whys” of the disciples even as they start. The simple answer of Jesus is that neither sinned. It does not matter why this man was born blind. Regardless, God, full of grace and mercy, can use even this situation and use it for God's glory. Jesus does not join the disciples in pointless conversation as they try to find fault. Jesus does not join us in pointless conversation about what we would do if we were God. Often, Jesus spends precious little time explaining the actions of God. What Jesus, God incarnate, does is see a person in need; a person in such need

that it will take the power of God to overcome his blindness. With that, Jesus stops talking and starts healing. Jesus is action: healing the blindness is more important than debating the theology of illness. Jesus is about doing something about evil, disease, hardship within the world.

The blind man could suddenly see the light, the light of God. What's more, he had the opportunity to become light. When challenged, even when threatened, he remained willing to tell the world about the light of Jesus, the light he could now see.

The Gospel of John pointedly contrasts the man who can now see and the Pharisees who are truly, even stubbornly, blind. But we miss the point if we just dismiss the Pharisees as evil, as rigid religious reactionaries. We need to give them the benefit of the doubt, assuming that they are acting out of their deep conviction and faith. However, the man born blind knew that he was blind; he knew when things changed, when he could miraculously see. The Pharisees knew, or at least thought, that they could see, that there was no need for change. Therefore, they had no expectation of a miracle, much less an appreciation for the one that had just occurred. They simply could not see Jesus, see God, in action.

The story of David reminds us that we are all blind; we are all too willing to see through our physical eyes, eyes that limit what we can see. Our eyes often blind us from seeing what God routinely sees, and does. In Samuel, God could see the heart of David, knew that David would be the greatest king ever of Israel. God looks within us and not at our externals. Yet, God could also see that even though devout and full of faith,

David would suffer. Yet as he suffered, whether as he lovingly tried to reach out to the raging King Saul or as a result of his own horrific sins, David never lost his faith; never stopped seeing the hand of God upon his life.

These stories challenge us to look at our own blindness. We have an opportunity to see. We do not need to remain blind. Jesus comes and sees our need, our unique forms of individual blindness. He does not ask why we are blind. Rather, Jesus simply offers to us God's miracle of sight, to see God's creation, to experience God's mercy, to feel God's loving hand upon our lives.

Like the Pharisees and the blind man, we have a choice. We can assume that we can see everything that is around us, being surprised by nothing, but rigidly constrained by the limits of our vision. We can ask endless questions without answers. Or we can assume that we are blind, that we need Jesus to open our eyes to endless excitement, catching glimpses of a loving God, accepting God's grace in action. Jesus is still more about letting us see the light of God than asking why we are blind to the glory of God at work around us, within us, and letting God use us for God's glory. Jesus still encourages us to reflect his light, become light, for this dark world.

We can live blind, in darkness.

Or we can live seeing the light of Christ, becoming that light for others.

Lord, Help us to recognize our blindness. Let us see! Amen.