

They all looked at him but they never saw him. He was the blind guy. Born that way. Day after day he sat and begged. They looked. They walked by. They wondered. But they never saw. He had never seen their faces until today. He had never seen his own face, his parents' faces, a sunrise, the stars, his home, a smile until today. Before today it was as if he didn't even exist. He was a life waiting to be born, a light waiting to shine, a word waiting to be spoken. Today he became a new creation, he was enlightened, he became a living testimony to the Son of Man but they still don't see him. For some reason they are unable to see him.

The disciples look at him and see a theological question, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Their vision is inaccurate because of the popular belief that suffering is caused by sin and you get what you deserve.

The neighbors looked but couldn't see past the image of the way things had always been, a blind man sitting and begging. It is all he had ever known. It is all they had ever known. Blinded by disbelief they keep asking him, "How were your eyes opened?"

Two times the religious leaders call him in. Two times they question him. Two times he gives glory to God. They cannot see the prophet, the man from God, which this once blind man now sees. They cannot see the new life, the new man, the new creation that bears testimony to the man from God. Two times they turn a blind eye to this man and his God. No one, as the saying goes, is more blind than the one who chooses not to see. They have chosen power, rules, and boundaries over the truth and their eyes have grown dim.

Even this man's own parents distance themselves from him. They can talk about their blind son but not about their seeing son. To see him, the enlightened son, meant they would have to tell the story. "We do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak

for himself.” They deny what is right before their eyes. Fear does that. Fear keeps us from seeing a larger reality, from living with a larger vision.

They all looked but none saw him. If they saw him they would have to confront their own blindness. This man blind from birth is not just a single individual; he is every man, every woman. The only difference between him and all the others in today’s gospel is that he knows he is blind. Until we know we are blind we can never see with new eyes. “Surely we are not blind, are we?”

Blindness is not about the quality of our vision or the condition of our eyes. It is not about the darkness around us but, rather, the darkness within us. How we see others, what we see in the world, the way we see life is less about the objects of our seeing and more about ourselves. We do not see God, people, things, or circumstances as they are but as we are. Until our eyes are opened by Christ our seeing is really just a projection of ourselves onto the world. What we see and how we see manifest our inner world. They describe and point to the fears, attachments, and beliefs within us.

If we wish to see God, life, and others as they really are then we must attend to what is going on within us. True seeing begins in the heart not the eyes. We must begin to acknowledge the fears, attachments, and beliefs that live within us and how they have impaired our vision.

Think about a time when you were scared, really scared. Maybe it was about your marriage, your job, the illness of loved one. That fear had a way of blinding you. Fear rivets our attention on that thing we fear to the exclusion of everything else around us. That one thing is all we can think about, all that we can see.

Attachments are those things or people we think we must have to be happy. We cannot imagine life without them. We have convinced ourselves that our very existence in some way depends on them. The Bible calls them idols. Modern society calls them addictions. Regardless, we will inevitably look for and see only

that which fosters and affirms our attachments and will turn a blind eye toward anything that threatens them. Our vision becomes selective.

We have probably all met someone who is so fanatical in his or her beliefs that he or she cannot see another point of view. He cannot look at any other possibility. She refuses to see other ways but her own. Not only have we met these people too often we are these people. We all have certain beliefs to which we cling. They offer the illusion of stability and security. So we no longer live in the real world, God's world, but a world that we have created in our head.

The inner darkness of our fears, attachments, and beliefs is what keeps us from seeing. They cover our eyes like the mud on the eyes of the man born blind. In placing mud on the blind man's eyes Jesus is holding before him the reality of his blindness. He wears thick black lenses of fear, attachments, and beliefs. We all do. Those who know this are sent to wash in the pool, to be re-created, and to see with new eyes. Once they were darkness but now in the Lord they are light. The rest will continue looking but never see, their faces covered with mud.

Don't just look around. Look within. What do you see? How do you see? Where is the mud of darkness in your life? Name that reality. Acknowledge it and then go wash. The mud of darkness always gives way to the light of Christ.