

In the scriptures we remember the man born blind, who testifies before the Pharisees: "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes."

In the King's Speech, we remember the archbishop of Canterbury concerned that he has to place the crown on the head of a king who is ready, seeks the very best, most degreed speech pathologists in the land. King George VI, who gives the final word that Lionel Logue, an uneducated, controversial and unorthodox Australian, stays by saying "but Archbishop, it is my head."

The Pharisees, concerned for right practice and right belief, believe that Jesus, who heals on the Sabbath, cannot be a man of God.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, equally concerned for high position, rank, and class of education, makes inquiries into Lionel Logue's background. They discover he is an amateur, a failed actor, who coached actors in elocution, from Australia, who simply helped returning war vets tell their own stories. In London, he runs his practice on the whim of his instincts with no letters behind his name.

Angered that they should be so trumped, the Pharisees throw the former blind man out of the synagogue.

It's only because the King of the Commonwealth is also head of the church, that King George can trump the Archbishop of Canterbury, dean of Westminster Abbey.

For those who have not seen the King's Speech, this year's best picture at the Academy Awards, it's the story of a relationship between England's default King, with a speech impediment – a stammer - and the man who would become his companion at every speech he would ever give. When the future King Edward abdicates his responsibility to marry the woman he loves – Wallis Simpson – a twice divorced commoner from Baltimore, his brother, Prince Albert is first in line. But a prince, who speaks for his people, silenced by his own voice, will not make a very good king.

It is the early days of Nazi Germany when preparations are made for Albert to be crowned King George the VI. His wife, Elizabeth exhausts all possibilities to help her husband seek a solution to his stammer, seeking the cures of any number of quacks.

The remedies are outlandish; everything from stuffing glass balls into his mouth while trying to speak, to smoking to relax the throat. Finally the princess takes the rickety ride down an elevator the size of a postage stamp and finds Lionel Logue in a basement office. Arrangements are made and the King arrives. When the future king lights up a cigarette to relax, Logue tells him "Don't do that in here. "Why not?" says the prince. "Sucking smoke into your lungs will kill you." The King responds: "My physicians tell me it helps to relax the throat." And Logue answers, "They're idiots." "They've been knighted." "Makes it official then," and Logue ends the conversation.

Together, Logue and the King go through a series of antics that test both men's character and their trust of one another. For this is certainly a movie about trust. In the end Logue and King George become very good friends for the rest of their lives and Logue is present with the King at every wartime broadcast the he makes.

I'm not certain why this movie won best picture. I've been scratching my head ever since. I'm not certain its brilliant movie making. The movie score is flat and uninteresting. Even though the movie got the Oscar for best screen play, I'm not sure the dialogue was all that great. Sheila tells me she nearly fell asleep three times. But I would ask equally, who here nearly fell asleep when we heard the scriptures this morning, for it was just as flat,

In fact, in my mind, the story that Shirley read for us is one of the silliest experiences described in all of the Christian scriptures. A man is born blind. Jesus makes two mud balls from his own spit, puts them on the man's eyes then tells him to bathe in the pool of Siloam, a bath known in biblical times for its healing properties. Miraculously, the blind man is cured of his blindness as the gospel writer affirms what Jesus is quoted: "As long as I am in the world, I am in the light of the world." Had Jesus not done this sometime between sundown Friday and sundown Saturday, it wouldn't have received much notice. But healing on the Sabbath, well that's a matter for the Pharisees and they are not happy.

In a comic run from pillar to post, the Pharisees are divided over the meaning of this healing, so they drag this man through a series of inquisitions about what happened, seeking to know by what authority Jesus heals and whether or not the man was blind at all. His parents are hauled in to be questioned. But fearful for their own safety, they seem to point in all other directions. They don't want to make a judgment about whether Jesus is a man of God or not.

Finally, after the silliness is over, the man says, "Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

The Pharisees have nothing to say because of course, the man is right. But they're so angered by being so stymied that they throw him out of the synagogue telling him his blindness was a curse from God in the first place. What does he know anyway?

An exact parallel of this scene is played out in the movie when the King and Lionel Logue come to rehearse for the king's coronation. Logue has asked that all preparations in Westminster Abbey come to a standstill while he and the King work together in that space, alone. When Logue arrives to work with the King, bitterness is the only thing that comes out of the king's mouth. The Archbishop has done some inquiring, and has discovered that Logue has no credentials. He is an Australian (remember Australia is where Britain sent her worst criminals – rapists, murders, thieves), and he has no credentials. The King expresses feelings of betrayal and humiliation and feels like he must begin again. When Logue reminds them all that he has never falsely put letters behind his name, or ever called himself "doctor." With only his experience, his compassion and his presence, he helps people find their voice.

When the king isn't sure, Logue sits in the Coronation throne and the king flips out.

"Get up! Y-you can't sit there! GET UP!" "Why not?" says Logue, "It's a chair."

"T-that... that is Saint Edward's chair."

"People have carved their names on it."

The king begins to get angry: "L-listen to me... listen to me!"

"Why should I waste my time listening to you?"

"Because I have a voice!"

And Logue ends the conversation again: "yes, yes you do."

The King comes to realize how much he trusts Logue and how much Logue has helped him – without papers, without degrees, without letters behind his name. And the King asks the Archbishop to ensure that Logue sits in the King's box during the coronation. The man born blind has no idea whether Jesus has the right credentials either. He just knows he sees. And Jesus invites him into a renewed life.

Friends, the Spirit blows where it will. It gifts people with what they need to respond to calls leadership and service because they're the right person. There may be people who will challenge that call, believing you to be unqualified. But the Spirit blows where it will. Sometimes, the gifts that are needed will come with the credentials the world likes to see, but not always. If we're willing, we'll pay attention to the leading of that same Spirit. We too will be empowered by the same Spirit, and we will be presented with gifts that uniquely serve the world. And if when we respond in trust, our gifts will be used for the healing of the world. May it be so. Amen.